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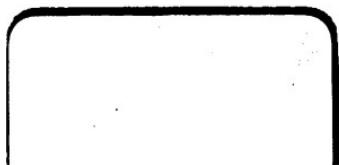
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WE CAN MAKE OUR LIVES SURPRISING.



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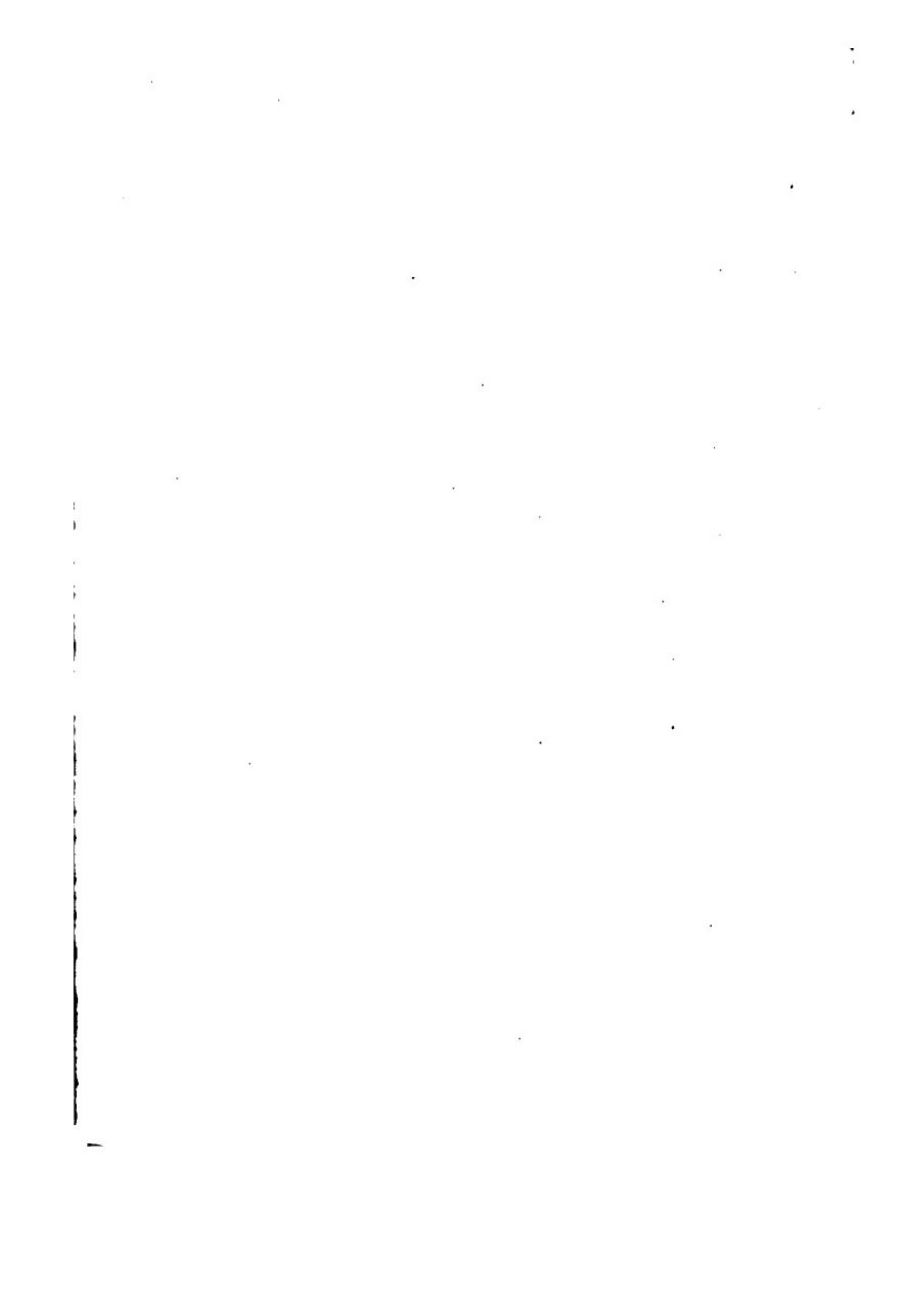
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**PALISSY, THE POTTER.**









# THE Story of PALISSY THE POTTER

T. NELSON AND SONS.  
LONDON, EDINBURGH AND NEW YORK.



PALISSY'S FINAL EXPERIMENT

page 3d







# THE Story of PALISSY THE POTTER

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# THE STORY OF PALISSY

THE POTTER.



"Never yet was good accomplished  
Without hand and thought."

BARRY CORNWALL.

LONDON:

T. NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW;  
EDINBURGH; AND NEW YORK.

1876.

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"In our time all the ideas of this man have been reawakened in the minds of the learned. His theories on waters, stones, marl, and manure have been confirmed : mineralogy, geology, paleontology, hydrostatics, physical geography, and organic chemistry have been constituted sciences; Palissy enters into all his rights as an observer and discoverer. If true glory advances slowly, its advance is sure. It will consist, for Palissy, less in vain honours and statues than in the animating of young men who, evermore, press towards God in their search for light."—*Alfred Dumesnil*, quoted by *Henry Morley*.

"Bernard de Palissy is the most perfect model of the workman. It is by his example, rather than by his works, that he has exercised an influence on civilization, and that he has deserved a place to himself amongst the men who have ennobled humanity. Though he had remained unknown and listless, making tiles in his father's pottery ; though he had never purified, moulded, or enamelled his handful of clay ; though his living groups, his crawling reptiles, his slimy snails, his slippery frogs, his lively lizards, and his damp herbs and dripping mosses had never adorned these dishes, covers, and salt-cellars, these quaint and elaborate ornaments of the tables and cupboards of the sixteenth century, it is true nothing would have been wanting to the art of Phidies or of Michael Angelo ; but we should not have had his life for the worker to admire and imitate."—*Lamartine*.



## PALISSY, THE POTTER.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE POTTER'S ART.

HE art of the potter, the Plastic or Ceramic Art, as it is sometimes called, has always been held in high repute. It is one of those first cultivated by every nation in the world; and men wrought in clay long before they learned to work in iron, gold, or silver. The most savage races, in their earliest approaches to civilization, feel the necessity of providing themselves with domestic utensils and culinary appliances, and hence one of their earliest possessions is the potter's wheel, which, in the old time, was as ubiquitous as, in our own days, is the steam-engine. The potter's work, though

now limited in the main to domestic use, was employed by the ancients, on their emerging from barbarism, for the highest and noblest purposes. As Mr. Marryatt remarks, it was through the productions of the plastic art that they expressed their homage for the dead, and rewarded the victor in the public games. Those who showed the greatest skill in its adaptation, who moulded the clay into the most beautiful forms, who designed the graceful vase or executed the eloquent sculpture, were honoured with statues and medals, and poets and historians did their best to make their names immortal. The potter's profession was eminently illustrious: the Roman Numa established a college for its members; and a family of potters, specially favoured with royal patronage, is mentioned in the genealogy of the tribe of Judah.\*

It is worth noting that the existence of pottery has proved of signal value and importance as an aid to historical research. From the pottery found in their graves and burial-places, the scholar is able to discover the manner of the domestic life of nations long since passed away, and even to

\* "These were the potters, and those that dwelt among plants and hedges: there they dwelt with the king for his work" (1 Chron. iv. 23). References to the potter's art continually occur in the Old Testament.

trace the geographical boundaries of the various great empires of the world. The extent of ancient Greece, of its colonies and its conquests, we follow up through each division of the Old World by the Greek sepulchral pottery, which, distinct in its character from any other, and existing as a manufacture for fully twelve centuries, long survived the political independence of Sparta, Athens, Argos, Macedon. So, too, we can trace the limits of the Roman empire through the landmarks afforded by the remains of the Roman pottery : in Germany, beyond the memorable battle-field where Hermann (or Arminius) defeated and destroyed the Roman legions of Varus, no relic of the Roman ware has been found ; and the frontier line of Roman conquest in Britain is similarly marked out. In our own island we can recognize the permanent character of the Saxon dominion, and the manner in which the Britons and their Saxon conquerors settled down together, by the British and Saxon ware which abounds in the *tumuli*, or burial-mounds, scattered over our downs and grassy hills. The extent of the Mohammedan rule in the Old World, and of the Aztec in the New, would be clearly recorded by their pottery, even if no other memo-

rial of their existence had been handed down to us.

The Greeks, the Romans, the Etruscans, the Egyptians, each in their several styles, attained to a wonderful degree of excellence in the Ceramic Art. This work is still prized for its exquisite beauty or originality. The productions of the Greek potters, more particularly, have served as models for their modern imitators. Their vases, cups, groups of figures, dishes, fountains, statuettes,—what shall we say of them, except that they were as graceful in form as they were rich in decoration? Not an ewer but was meet to be lipped by a Naiad; not a cup but was fit for a Hebe to present to the king of gods! Yet, during the fatal darkness of the Middle Ages, the manufacture of decorative pottery was entirely lost in Europe. Strangers wandering through the towns and villages of Italy occasionally chanced upon some beautiful relic of Greek genius or Etruscan skill, and regretted that the secret of their workmanship could not be discovered. Voyagers who had ventured as far as Egypt were struck with wonder by the ingenious products of the craft of the Egyptian potters. From China the costliest and most beautiful specimens of

luminous kaolin, or porcelain, were occasionally imported. In Spain the Mohammedan invaders had introduced the manufacture of the enamelled earthenware tiles (or *azulejos*) with which the mosques of Persia and Arabia were embellished, and to which the famous Alhambra owes so much of its peculiar charm. But in Western Europe generally, the potter's art, in its higher manifestations, was well-nigh dead. Skilful workers might be found in gold and silver, but none who knew how to give to clay an artistic shape, and enrich it with the light and glow of colour.

One of the earliest inquirers after the lost art was Luca della Robbia, a Florentine sculptor of eminence, born about 1400. Bred to the trade of a goldsmith, his genius inclined him to the profession of a sculptor, and to his adopted studies he applied himself with all the enthusiasm and energy of a genuine artist-nature. His chisel was rarely idle ; he wrought at his work far into the night hours ; and being unable to afford the luxury of a fire in the severe cold of a Florentine winter, he placed his feet in a basket of shavings to give them warmth. None will doubt that such heroic resolution, so single-minded a devotion to one steady aim, deserved and ensured

success. Luca became famous as a sculptor, and was employed to execute the celebrated frieze of singing-boys in marble for the organ-loft of the Duomo, or Cathedral; and also the beautiful bronze doors of the sacristy, which the stranger still contemplates with admiration. But though he obtained renown, he remained poor. Being led to compare the toil and time he expended on an image of bronze or marble with the sum he received in payment for it, he resolved to look round for some new material which, being more easily wrought, should afford a more lucrative return for his labours. After many experiments, he adopted clay, and he succeeded in inventing a glaze, or enamel,\* which increased the beauty as well as the durability of his new ware. Further application revealed the secret of colouring this enamel, so that it vied with the productions of the ancient potters; and Della Robbia's beautiful compositions, resplendent now in the azure of the skies, the purple of the hyacinth, and the golden glow of the orange, commanded the admiration and applause of kings and nobles.

Above the bronze doors in the Duomo he placed his first production in enamelled terra-cotta; namely,

\* Made of tin, combined with other mineral substances.

a *bas-relief* representing the Resurrection. It appears to have been executed about 1438, and is modelled in white on a blue ground. Luca, as we have said, subsequently introduced other colours; in his second essay, the Ascension, also placed in the Duomo, and executed in 1446, green is visible, as well as some touches of maroon and yellow. He made but limited use, however, of any colours but white and blue. Pietro de Medici, the Doge of Florence, employed him to ornament his study with a ceiling and flooring of enamelled earthenware; but Luca della Robbia's best works are all of a religious character, and may be found in the churches in or near Florence.

He died in 1481 at an advanced age, not only having invented a new and elegant branch of decorative art, but having also brought it to a perfection his immediate successors were unable to attain. Nor did his equal arise until, early in the sixteenth century, France gave birth to Bernard de Palissy. He, indeed, not only rivalled the Italian potter, but excelled him—excelled him in fertility of fancy and originality of design—while he introduced a species of ware so characteristic as well as beautiful, that it still retains the name

of its inventor. It is generally supposed that Palissy, to whose remarkable career the following pages will be devoted, was induced to adopt the potter's art by the sight of a beautiful enamelled cup, the workmanship of Della Robbia, or of one of his descendants. M. Brongniart, however, an eminent authority on all matters ceramic, is of opinion that the cup was not the production of Italy, but of Nuremberg; the Palissy ware greatly resembling the latter in the relief and colour of its ornamentation.

However this may be, Palissy, once inspired with the love of art, devoted himself to its pursuit with a self-denial and an enthusiasm which have made his name famous. No better example for imitation in all the highest and manliest virtues could be held before the young student; and we therefore proceed to tell the story of his life, hoping our readers may largely profit by its lessons.





## CHAPTER II.

### EARLY LIFE OF PALISSY.

 N the early part of the sixteenth century, one of the principal trades—we had almost said, arts—in France was that of a worker in painted glass. It was held in such repute, probably because it was chiefly employed in the decoration of churches, convents, and other sacred buildings, that poor nobles did not disdain to apprentice their sons to it, and many men of aristocratic lineage kept the wolf from the door by their skill in shaping and colouring glass. So complete, indeed, was this infusion of nobility into the glass trade, that a belief arose, which in some parts of the Continent prevails to this day, that the occupation was solely restricted to nobles; that they transmitted its mysteries—for in those days every trade had its jealously-preserved secrets—to their children; and allowed no new business

to be opened by a stranger unless he could produce a certificate of patrician birth. But, as Mr. Morley says, this was never *legally* the case ; it depended solely upon custom, and upon the custom of certain districts ; yet it is true that glass-working everywhere enjoyed the prestige of being an honourable and illustrious pursuit.

About 1509 or 1510, at a small hamlet in the diocese of Agen,\* a glass-worker of the name of Palissy carried on his trade. He was poor, but he was of noble family ; so poor, that when in the year we have mentioned a son was born to him, he was wholly unable to supply the means of providing him with a suitable education. This son, christened Bernard, proved, however, to possess one of those quick, strong, eager intellects which find food where weaker minds starve ; and though he learned nothing of Greek and Latin, he learned a good deal of other things which proved invaluable to him in his later life. What his father knew, the son also knew, and much beside. He was taught to read and write ; and as soon as he was old enough, the elder Palissy initiated him into the mysteries of *Verrerie*, or glass-working. He gained some necessary know-

\* According to one of Palissy's biographers, the place was Chapelle Biron.  
(472)

ledge of the minerals employed in staining glass, and of their properties ; and, above all, a close and loving study of Nature, of earth and sky, of tree and flower, of shadowy woods and flowing waters, revealed to him truths of the profoundest significance and highest value. For no one ever reads the book of Nature patiently and devoutly without gaining precious knowledge from its richly-stored pages.

We may use our imagination, as Mr. Morley does, to picture this eager, quick-minded, large-souled boy—for the man was all this, and as the man so the boy—fingering his father's drugs and pigments, and asking curious questions concerning them ; and when the answers do not satisfy him, rambling forth into the neighbouring forest to think out his difficulties for himself, or to seek some solution of them from kindly Nature.

Moreover, a glass-painter's work requires that he should draw and paint from certain patterns placed under the glass, from designs invented by himself or others ; and it is certain that Bernard Palissy was not content with servile imitation. He laboured to become an artist ; that is, to be able to originate. And the diligence with which he practised drawing, and studied the best and

purest models, exercised a happy influence over his after-career. His models were the best and purest, because they were the models so prodigally supplied by Nature. The woods, with their variety of bough, spray, and leaf; the lichen-tinted, weather-worn rocks; the birds, the lizards, the blossoms,—all these were an inexhaustible source of inspiration to the young but sympathetic artist, who comprehended all their beauty.

And so it came to pass that by the time our hero had grown tall and strong, and the down of coming manhood was darkening his smooth chin, Bernard was not only a skilful worker in glass, but an adept with his pencil, whose fame as an artist was noised through all the neighbouring villages. The trade of *Verrerie*, however, was then in a rapid decay. France was plunged in desperate war, and her warriors and merchants had no time to think of painted windows. Bernard saw that his father could not support him, and he knew that a livelihood was not to be obtained in Agen. Hopeful and heroic, he resolved to go out into the world, and wrest from its reluctant grasp a name and a competency, if not a fortune.

Palissy wandered far and wide. These wander-

ings were, indeed, his education, and they taught him much. Across all France he travelled, from the Ardennes to the Pyrenees; and wherever he went, he stored up some facts for future use. From Antwerp in the east, to Brest on the stormy west coast of Brittany; from Brittany, along the sweet southern shore, and in sight of the Mediterranean, to Montpellier, and Nismes, and the Pyrenees; through Limousin, Auvergne, Berri, and the vineyards of Burgundy and Champagne, he made his way,—studying the landscape with keen observant eye, noting the peculiarities of the soil, and living, it may be supposed, by his skill in painting. He watched the vapours in the Ardennes, and came to the conclusion that among their mountains mineral springs might be found, like those of Spa. He noticed the peculiar quality of the glass used in the churches of Poitou and Brittany. In the Pyrenees he was much interested by the phenomena attending the condensation of vapour and the formation of snow. In a word, Palissy made of travel what always *should* be made of it,—a means of disciplining, storing, and strengthening the intellect. And as during his ten or twelve years of wandering his restless spirit of inquiry was never idle, we may easily con-

jecture what treasures of information on all kinds of subjects, the rare, the curious, the important, the trivial, he must have accumulated.

His erratic course was terminated, at length, by a very momentous step : Palissy married. Who was his wife, or where he met with her, or when the marriage took place, we know not ; but there is reason to believe that she was fair and delicate—a plant fitted to blossom in the sunshine of good fortune rather than to struggle against the storms of adversity. Having married, he could no longer wander to and fro as he listed. It was necessary he should settle somewhere, and secure, if possible, a permanent home. He chose for his place of residence a quaint old town in the south-west of France—Saintes ; the picturesque capital of the picturesque district of Saintonge, a district fertile in corn, and wine, and fruit.

Saintes stands on the river Charente, at the foot of a mountain whose declivity is strewn with Roman ruins. The bridge which spans the river is of Roman architecture, built, it is said, in the reign of Tiberius, and adorned with a triumphal arch. In a hollow just outside the town were, and are, the remains of a Roman amphitheatre. The streets of Saintes were then—

as, indeed, they are now—narrow and winding, with low irregular houses, and high convent walls. The cathedral, dedicated to St. Peter, was a spacious and stately edifice, of which only the campanile, or bell-tower, remains. Taking into account the antiquities in which the town abounded, and the beauty of the scenery which lay all about it, we must own that Palissy chose for his residence a place well-suited to his antiquarian and poetical tastes.

It was in 1538, and at the age of twenty-nine, that Palissy and his wife became inhabitants of the ancient town. They chose for themselves a small house situated on the outskirts, where Palissy could enjoy those views of hill, vale, and shining waters which he so much loved; and where, it may be, he could keep alive the large fires necessary for his work, but considered dangerous in narrow, crowded streets. The position would seem to have been exposed, for he tells us he lay awake at night listening to the winds and rain, with no other diversion than the hooting of the owls in one direction, and the barking of the dogs in another.

Here, however, he and his wife were happy, and children were born to them, and Palissy

laboured strenuously to supply the wants of his little household. He had three strings to his bow ; for he was a surveyor, a painter, and a worker in glass. It was chiefly in the first capacity that his neighbours patronized him. His knowledge of geometry was considerable, and he made maps of estates, or laid down plans for houses and gardens, with great dexterity. In those days, however, men did not often build, or acquire fresh lands, and engagements came in but slowly ; while for painted glass there was, literally, no demand. But his household was economical, and at first, supported by the buoyancy of youth, and his consciousness of intellectual power, he got on bravely. He worked hard ; and the day's work done, he betook himself into the vales and meadows, and returning home with moss, or flower, or rare animal, he explained its beauty to his Lisette, as he proceeded to sketch it in his note-book.

“ Truly,” he writes, “ it is a great recreation ” —and such he undoubtedly found it—“ to those who will contemplate admiringly the wondrous works of Nature ; and methinks I could find nothing better than to employ one's-self in the art of agriculture, and to glorify God, and to admire him in his marvels. As I walked along the

avenues, and under the foliage of the chestnuts, I heard the murmuring waters of a brook which passes at the foot of the hill; and on the other side the voices of the young birds warbling among the trees; then there came to my memory that 104th Psalm, in which the Psalmist sings, ‘He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills;’ also, he says, ‘By them shall the fowls of the air have their habitation, which sing among the branches.’

“ When I had walked through the avenue,” he continues, “ I turned towards the side where the woods and mountains are, and there I received a great contentment, and much joyous pleasure, for I saw the squirrels gathering the fruits and leaping from branch to branch, with many pretty looks and gestures; further on I beheld the rooks busy at their repast; and again, under the apple-trees, I found certain hedgehogs, which had rolled themselves up, and having thrust their little hairs, or needles, through the said apples, went so burdened. I saw likewise many things narrated in that Psalm: as the conies, playing and bounding along the mountains, near certain holes and pits which the Sovereign Architect has made for them; and when suddenly the animals caught sight of an

enemy, they knew well how to retire into the place which was ordained to be their dwelling. Then I exclaimed, ‘O Lord, how manifold are thy works : in wisdom hast thou made them all.’ Such sights as these have made me so great a lover of the fields, that it seems to me there are no treasures on earth so precious, or which ought to be held in such great esteem, although they are the most despised.”

But as Palissy’s family increased, this happy, pleasant summer-time of life was gradually overclouded. More and more numerous grew his wants, but his means did not keep pace with them. He kept a bright face for the world, but his heart was sad, and his hopefulness had departed. Where should he seek for more employment ? In what way could he add to his little income ? While he was endeavouring to find an answer to these questions, which pressed so urgently upon him both as husband and father, it happened that he received a commission from one of the great lords in the neighbourhood, who had some taste for art, and had collected various specimens of ancient and mediæval pottery. In showing these to Palissy, he exhibited among them an earthen

cup, which was so exquisitely wrought as instantly to fill him with admiration, and to inspire his mind with a new ambition ;—“an earthen cup,” he says, “turned and enamelled with so much beauty, that from that time I entered into controversy with my own thoughts, recalling to mind certain suggestions that people had made to me jestingly, when I was painting portraits. For, observing that these were no longer in request in the country where I dwelt, and that glass-painting also was little patronized, I began to think that if I could discover how to make enamels, I could work earthen vessels and other objects very prettily ; inasmuch as God had gifted me with some knowledge of drawing.” Observe here the devout nature of the man, of which we shall have more to say by-and-by. He took nothing upon himself, assumed to himself no credit, made no boast of his acquirements ; all came from God, and for all he possessed of intellectual energy and power he reverently returned thanks to God.

At this epoch in his life, the starting-point of his career, Palissy knew nothing of the art of pottery, and in all France there was not one man who could teach him even its rudiments. But this did not discourage him. Enamels could be

made; for he had seen the precious, beautiful cup; and what was possible for others was possible for him, if he had the will, and the patience, and the perseverance. And then, how great was the reward! It was worth some days, or weeks; or months of labour to secure it! To be the only man in France capable of manufacturing enamelled vases, was to have in his hands assured wealth; and what he valued more, assured fame; and what he valued most, the means of enriching his country with a new branch of industrial art. So thenceforth, regardless of the fact that he had no knowledge of clays, he began to seek for the enamels, as a man gropes in the dark.





## CHAPTER III.

### PALISSY THE POTTER.

**P**ALISSY lost no time in carrying out his new resolve. He was as prompt in execution as he was fertile of resource, and having determined the path he would take in his future life, he immediately set to work to overcome the obstacles that were accumulated at the threshold. That these were numerous and serious, he knew, but the knowledge did not daunt him. His was one of those high and noble natures which are stimulated to exertion by the difficulties that to lesser spirits seem unconquerable, and it may truly be said of him that his fervent intellect found as much enjoyment in the *struggle* as in the *prize*.

To begin with : he had not the least idea of what materials the wished-for enamel was composed, and he therefore pounded, with indis-

criminate energy, all the substances which he supposed likely to answer his purpose. And having laboriously pounded and ground them, he purchased a quantity of earthen pots, and breaking them up into pieces, he coated them with some of the materials he had thus prepared. Each of these he distinguished by a mark, and he noted down carefully the drugs he had employed upon it. Then he set to work to construct a furnace ; and kindling a fire, he set his fragments down to bake.

As the purchase of drugs and pots, and the building of the furnace, and the time devoted to his new occupation, seriously impaired Palissy's already limited income, his wife looked on with grave concern. She quite perceived that if her husband discovered the white enamel, the discovery would make them rich ; but how were they to subsist meanwhile ? And if, after all, he failed, what then ? However, at first she offered no opposition, and Palissy fed his fire, and watched the progress of his work. He hoped, that of all the mixtures he had compounded, one at least might run over the pottery, when melted, in such a way as to afford him some dim hint, which was all he wanted, of the composition of the white enamel.

He sought only after *white* enamel, to begin with, because he had been told that white enamel was the basis of all others. The idea was good, but it did not prove successful. He essayed the experiment again, and again, and again ; always hopeful, never discouraged ; but the result was not what he anticipated. The reasons for his want of success are given by himself.

"Because I had never seen earth baked," he says, "nor could I tell by what degree of heat the said enamel should be melted, it was impossible for me to get any result in this way, though my chemicals should have been right ; because, at one time, the mass might have been heated too much—at another, too little ; and when the said materials were baked too little, or burned, I could not at all detect the cause of my want of success, but would throw the blame on the materials, which sometimes, perhaps, were the right ones, or at least could have afforded me some hint for the accomplishment of my intentions, if I had been able to manage the fire in the way that my materials required. But again, in working thus, I committed a fault still greater than the above-named ; for in putting my trial pieces in the furnace I arranged them without consideration ; so that if

the materials had been the best in the world, and the fire also the fittest, it was impossible for any good result to follow. Thus, having blundered several times at a great expense, and through much labour, I was every day pounding and grinding new materials, and constructing new furnaces, which cost much money, and consumed my wood, and my time."

Surely, never before did man exhibit a sublimer patience, a more unconquerable resolution ! Month after month, supported by an enthusiasm of which only the true artist is capable, Palissy renewed his experiments, and continued his anxious toil. He built his furnaces and fed their fires with his own hands, and in the terrible heat he stood for hours, watching the course of every fresh attempt. Wood was then the fuel used throughout all France, and wood was dear. To purchase it, and to purchase the chemicals requisite for his experiments, he had to deprive his wife, his children, and himself of every household comfort. He had to face the melancholy looks of his wife, and the pale countenances of his children, with no other consolation than the knowledge that he was striving after a great prize. His means decreased daily. At last, he bethought him that he might save the

terrible expense of building and rebuilding his furnaces. "And so," he says, "when I had thus fooled away several years imprudently, with sorrows and sighs, because I could not at all arrive at my intention, I resolved, in order to avoid such large expenditure, to send the chemicals that I would test to the kiln of some potter; and having settled this within my mind, I purchased afresh several earthen vessels, and breaking them in pieces, as was my custom, I covered three or four hundred of the fragments with enamel, and despatched them to a pottery distant a league and a half from my dwelling, with a request to the potters that they would please to permit those trials to be baked within some of their vessels."

Palissy was so good a customer to the potters that they willingly acceded to his request. They were duly placed in the kiln, and the heroic experimentalist, on the following day, was present at the drawing of the batch. But when his trial pieces came forth he received nothing but "shame and loss." They turned out good for nothing, because the fire used by the potters was not strong enough, nor were the sherds introduced into the furnace in the required manner, and on scientific principles. The work had all to be done over

again. There was no help for it. In all such cases there *is* no help for it, but to begin afresh, and put your trust in that God who ever recompenseth honest and zealous work.

Palissy again compounded, and again he grinded, and another batch was sent to the potter's kiln ; and this he did time after time, with great cost, confusion, and sorrow. At length, his home resources were completely spent, and he was forced to recognize the fact that his wife was pinched and worn, that his children were wan and sickly, for want of sufficient nourishment, and that as yet he had not obtained even a hint of the white enamel. He resolved therefore to desist from its pursuit for awhile : not, indeed, to abandon it wholly, but to give himself an interval of rest ; and turning away from his drugs and potsherds, he once more occupied himself in his art of painting and glass-working, and comported himself “as if he was not zealous to dive any more into the secret of enamels.”

Just at this moment Saintes was visited by the royal commissioners appointed to establish the *gabelle*, or salt-tax, in the district of Saintonge ; for which purpose it was necessary that a map should be laid down of “the islands and the

countries surrounding all the salt-marshes in that part of the world." To execute this task there was no man so competent as Bernard Palissy, and to him accordingly it was entrusted. The work was profitable, and supplied him with employment for several months, during which period peace and prosperity once more smiled on his modest household. It was also hard work, and kept Palissy's mind continually employed, for he had to journey far and near, in all weathers, and in districts invariably flooded in the winter; and it was not until after its completion in the summer of 1544 that he once more reverted to his favourite pursuit. Then, finding himself in possession of a little money, he resumed his quest after the white enamel.

In this second campaign the first note of war was one which doubtlessly sounded harsh and discordant in the ears of Madame Palissy. "I broke," writes the Seeker, "about three dozen earthen pots—all of them new." Then, having ground in his usual manner a large quantity of different materials, he covered all the sherds with his chemicals, laid on with a brush; though the reader must understand that in two or three hundred of these pieces only three were covered

with any one kind of compound. This being done, he carried his precious fragments to a glass-house, in order to see whether his compounds and chemicals might avail him anything when tested in the strong heat of a glass-furnace.

The next day, when they were drawn out, Palissy observed that some of them had begun to melt ; a circumstance which gave him so much encouragement that for ten years he continued his wearisome experiments, travelling to and fro between his home and the adjacent glass-houses, steadfastly keeping before him his one fixed aim. He fell again into poverty ; he lost one or two children ; his wife upbraided him ; his neighbours despised him ; but for ten years he bought pots and broke them. For ten years he bought drugs and burned them. For ten years he toiled and strove, with no other support than that which he derived from the constancy of his genius.

Without success, and without abating one jot of heart or hope, he continued his exertions for ten years. And then his conscience as a husband and a father was troubled, and he began to doubt whether he was not neglecting for a vain and wild ambition his duty towards his family. After much internal conflict he resolved on a final

experiment. If it failed, he would abandon his unprofitable quest. If it succeeded, he should know he was doing a work in which it was the will of Heaven he should persevere.

He broke up a larger number of pots than ever, purchased a greater variety of chemicals, and compounded them into no fewer than three hundred different mixtures. Having placed these, each on its own fragment of pottery, duly marked and registered, he caused them to be conveyed to the glass-furnace, whither he himself repaired to watch and wait for the all-important issue.

On such moments, says his biographer, on such moments in a life the mind dwells as upon the recollection of a picture. We see the glow of the furnace reflected on the rude walls of the neighbouring hovels. We obtain a glimpse of some rich foliage, with scattered glints of sunshine about it, as a glass-worker approaches, and casts a burden of wood into the devouring oven to feed the crackling, roaring flame. Three or four men of Saintonge are busy about the place; rough, harsh-featured churls, contrasting strongly with the spare frame and intellectual countenance of Bernard Palissy. Bernard is now in the prime of manhood, aged about thirty-seven, worn and

wasted by his anxious labour, but still full of mental and physical vigour. His eyes shine with a deep spiritual light as they gaze on the furnace mouth, and his mind dwells on the complexity of the problem which for ten years has defied solution. But now, the furnace is open, and a great glare goes up from the shining molten glass. The men rake over the burning embers, and Palissy scans curiously his array of potsherds. The material on one of them is melted! What does this portend? Take it out deftly, my men, and lay it aside to cool. The furnace door is slammed close, and Palissy sits down to wait for the cooling of his compound. Ha! as it cools it hardens, and as it hardens it grows whiter—whiter—whiter still—until now it is white as snow, and polished as marble! A white enamel, “singularly beautiful!”

And so, to use Palissy's own simple language, God mercifully willed that when he had begun to lose courage, and had gone for the last time to the glass-furnace, taking with him a man who carried upwards of three hundred trial pieces, there should be one among those pieces which melted within four hours after it had been placed in the furnace, and then turned out white and

polished, in a way that awoke in him such joy as to make him feel a new creature !

It is needless to say that henceforth Palissy thought nothing more of abandoning his quest. He had left the issue, as it were, to be decided by Heaven, and Heaven had given him a sign which he could not misunderstand. The success of his experiment was complete, so far as it went. He had learned the secret of the composition of the white enamel ; he had next to learn how it might be utilized. He did not in the least deceive himself. Before he could imitate or equal the beautiful enamelled cup of Italian or German make which had instigated him to undertake his laborious enterprise, he knew that he had difficulties to overcome in no wise inferior to those he had already confronted and conquered ; but the light of victory seemed to shine exultantly on the path he was about to tread, and he went onward, led by hope and faith.

But it was necessary that for the future his work should be done in private. And as it was evident that the enamel could be melted in a furnace like that of the glass-workers, even such a furnace he must erect in his own house ; or, rather, in a contiguous shed. Here his first diffi-

culty met him : want of means. Bricks he contrived to obtain,—probably on credit,—but he could not afford to hire a cart to bring them to his premises; he had to fetch them on his back. He could pay no man to assist him, and he therefore built the furnace with his own hands : drawing water from the well, mixing the materials for his mortar ; bricklayer's labourer, mason, porter, water-carrier,—he was all things in himself. The self-reliant man was cheered in his solitary toil by visions of the graceful shapes the enamelled clay would assume when moulded by his skilful hand.

At length the furnace was constructed, and the cups intended for the enamelling process were got ready. An interval of seven months had occurred between the discovery of the enamel and the commencement of the furnace, and this interval Palissy assiduously employed in experiments upon clay, so as to select the kind likely to turn whitest and smoothest in the fire.

The cups were made and successfully baked. Then Palissy took his preparation of tin, lead, iron, antimony, manganese, sand, litharge, and copper, and measuring them off in fixed proportions, began to grind. As it was necessary to make a large quantity, the work was severe, and

occupied upwards of a month, though he rose early and retired late. "The labour of the grinding," we are told, "did not consist only in the reduction of each ingredient to the finest powder. When ground, they were to be weighed and put together in the just proportions, and then, by a fresh series of poundings and grindings, they were to be very accurately mixed. The mixture was made, the vessels were coated with it. To heat the furnace was the next task; it had to be far hotter than it was when it had baked his clays—as hot, if possible, as the never-extinguished fires used by the glass-workers. But Bernard's fire had been extinct during the days of grinding: poverty could not spare a month's apparent waste of fuel."

Bernard proceeded to light his furnace-fire, as at the glass-houses, by two mouths, which produce a greater amount of air, and ensure, therefore, a more rapid combustion and stronger heat. Into the blazing mass he thrust his cups with their cunningly contrived composition. What he had now to hope for was, that his composition might melt, and flow over the vessels in such a manner as to cover them with an even and uniform coat of the white enamel. If this took

place, his triumph was complete ; the victory was won ; and his long struggle would result in wealth and fame.

All day and all night Palissy fed the devouring furnace-fire. Whatever befell, *that* must not be suffered to wax dim. All day and all night he fed the furnace-fire. His children brought him his scanty fare, which he ate, with the bead-drops rolling from his haggard brow. The enamel did not melt. A second day dawned, and still Palissy was at his post. He piled on more fuel ; the fire blazed and roared with hungry violence ; but the enamel did not melt. Day and night he fed the greedy furnace-fire. He had but little sleep, and what sleep he had was disturbed by anxious dreams. Day and night he fed that voracious, cavernous mouth, and yet the enamel did not melt. Six days and nights this heroic, lonely man devoted to his terrible labour, and, so far, without avail.

It now occurred to him that in his enamel he might have mixed too little of the flux used to aid the melting of a metal. Once more he began to pound and grind the before-named materials, all the time vigilant that his furnace should not cool; and though he had double labour in thus pounding

and grinding and maintaining the fire, his high heart never failed him. In truth, his hope was more sanguine than ever, for the furnace having been so long lighted glowed with an indescribable heat, and the enamel, as it was newly compounded, would be readier to melt. All his own vessels having been spoiled, he went into the town, and purchased a supply of ready-made pots, which he coated with the enamel, and put into the furnace.

It was the last experiment, and Bernard stood by the fire, watchful that it should not wane or flicker for a moment. He knew how much depended on his perseverance at this crucial moment; that there was an almost certain hope the melting of the present mixture would produce the coveted enamelled ware, if he could but keep up the furnace-fire.

Suddenly he found that his stock of fuel was exhausted. He had neither money nor credit to obtain a fresh supply. What should he do? He rushed into the garden; he tore up the palings; he thrust them into the furnace; they burned and crackled, and were consumed; and yet the enamel did not melt. Another twenty minutes—another ten—and if the fire were maintained, the victory might yet be won. He dashed

into his house, and in spite of his wife's tears and the remonstrances of his neighbours, he broke up the tables, he tore up the flooring, and carried away his spoil to feed that devouring furnace. How the flame leaps upward ! What a roar goes up the reeking chimney ! More fuel—more fuel ! And see ! hurrah !—*the enamel melts !*

These last experiences of suffering and anxiety which we have so feebly recorded, are thus described by Palissy in his own simple yet graphic language :—

“ Having covered the new pieces with the said enamel, I put them into the furnace, keeping the fire still at its height ; but thereupon occurred to me a new misfortune, which caused great mortification ; namely, that the wood having failed me, I was forced to burn the palings which maintained the boundaries of my garden ; which being burnt also, I was forced to burn the tables and the flooring of my house, to cause the melting of the second composition. I suffered an anguish that I cannot speak, for I was quite exhausted and dried up by the heat of the furnace ; it was more than a month since my shirt had been dry upon me. Further to console me, I was the object of mocking ; and even those from whom solace

was due ran crying through the town that I was burning my floors ! And in this way my credit was taken from me, and I was regarded as a madman.

" Others said that I was labouring to make false money, which was a scandal under which I pined away, and slipped with bowed head through the streets, like a man put to shame. I was in debt in several places, and had two children at nurse, unable to pay the nurses ; no one gave me consolation, but, on the contrary, men jested at me, saying, ' It was right for him to die of hunger, seeing that he had left off following his trade ! ' All these things assailed my ears when I passed through the street ; but for all that, there still remained some hope which encouraged and sustained me, inasmuch as the last trials had turned out tolerably well ; and thereafter I thought that I knew enough to get my own living, although I was far enough from that (as you shall hear afterwards).

" When I had dwelt with my regrets a little, because there was no one who had pity upon me, I said to my soul, ' Wherefore art thou saddened, since thou hast found the object of thy search ? Labour now, and the defamers will live to be

ashamed.' But my spirit said again, ' You have no means wherewith to continue this affair ; how will you feed your family, and buy whatever things are requisite to pass over the four or five months which must elapse before you can enjoy the produce of your labour ? '

But though so much had been accomplished, Palissy's difficulties were by no means at an end. He had discovered the secret of the white enamel ; he had discovered the means of melting it ; he had gained the desired knowledge ; but now came the pressing question, How was he to avail himself of it ? "Knowledge," says the Baconian adage, "is power ;" but only so when its possessor can employ and utilize it. Palissy was face to face with the greatest enemy the man of genius can find in his way—Poverty. Wealth was within his grasp, but when he put forth his hand to seize it, Poverty interposed its gaunt and terrible shadow. How shall I feed my family, said Palissy to himself, and buy whatever things are requisite to carry them through the four or five months which must elapse before I can enjoy the produce of my toil ? It was not easy to answer this pregnant question, but our heroic potter was not accustomed to be conquered by

doubt, fear, or apprehension. When I was thus seized with sorrow, he says, and debating in my spirit, hope gave me a little courage.

Knowing nothing of working in clay except the little he had taught himself, the moulding of his vessels had always occupied him a wearisomely long period. He determined now to avail himself of the help of others. "The more promptly to cause to appear," he says, "the secret which I had discovered of the white enamel, I took a common potter, and gave him certain drawings, in order that he might make vessels in accordance with my own designs;" for he wished to secure some forms of greater elegance and harmony than any in common use. It will seem to the reader an unwise thing that Palissy, when unable to support himself and his family with his own resources, and running into debt, should engage an assistant in the labours which seemed destined to bring about his ruin. But in his hour of need the enthusiast found a friend: an innkeeper in Saintes had so much confidence in the powers and rectitude of Palissy, that he supplied the potter with board and lodging for six months on credit. Palissy's biographers experience some difficulty in explaining or accounting for this act of generosity;

nace ; the fire was kindled, and assiduously kept up ; and in about twelve hours the enamel melted.

The reader will now suppose that Palissy's troubles were over, and that after so long a night and deep a darkness, morning and light had dawned at last upon him.

Alas ! the next day, when, full of hope, he repaired to his furnace, removed the fire, and drew forth his pottery, his sorrows and distresses were so cruelly augmented, that for once the brave, true man lost heart !

The enamel was properly mixed, and had melted properly ; the furnace was well built, and answered its purpose admirably ; yet the whole work was spoiled. The beautiful creations of his ingenious and fertile fancy—the labour of six weary months—of what avail was it all ? The weary brain—the shrunken limbs—the wounded hands—what had they done for their possessor ? No wonder that, with such an augmentation of sorrow and distress, Bernard Palissy, for once, lost heart.

What was the cause of this fresh failure ?

Palissy himself shall tell us. It was because the mortar of which he had built his furnace had been full of flints, and these feeding the vehe-

mence of the fire, at the same time that the enamels began to liquefy, burst into a hundred fragments, producing an infinite number of cracks and explosions within the said furnace. Then, because the splintered and shivered flints struck against the potter's work, the enamel, which was already liquefied and converted into a kind of paste, retained these fragments, and encrusted them all over his beautiful vessels and medallions, irremediably spoiling them.

By this unforeseen accident, Palissy tells us, he was unspeakably affected ; and not without cause, for, to say nothing of his labour, the furnace alone had cost him upwards of six-and-twenty gold dollars. He had borrowed the fuel and the chemicals, and so had mortgaged part of his hope of success in the products of his ingenious industry. He had kept off his creditors by promising to pay them out of the money realized by his enamelled vessels ; and now, all was lost ! The work had to be done over again, if he could find the time and the means.

" I underwent," says Palissy, " nothing but shame and confusion. For my vessels were all besprinkled with little morsels of flint, so finely embedded, so combined with the enamel, that on

passing the hand over it they cut like razors." Though the work was thus injured, there were still some persons willing to purchase it at a low price ; but because that would have been a stain on Palissy's reputation, "a decrying and abasement of his honour," he broke in pieces the entire batch, and flung himself on the ground in an excess of despair. To whom could he turn for consolation ? His wife loaded him with reproaches ; his neighbours sneered at him as a fool ; and all these reproaches and contumelious words came "to mingle with his grief!"

If one could sketch this scene with a master's pencil, it would make, as Mr. Morley says, a goodly picture.

"The dilapidated out-house, its breaches rudely filled up with green boughs ; Palissy grand in his own grief, tattered in dress, with a litter of beautiful vases, cups, urns, and medallions, the products of his rich taste and fancy, broken at his feet ; the angry creditors ; the village gossips pouring their much talk over his bowed spirit ; his thin, pale children crouching, wondering, about ; his lean wife—God forgave her on the instant—pouring on him maledictions, ignorant or careless how

his heart would open in that hour of anguish to receive one syllable of woman's consolation."

Palissy withdrew himself from the storm of words, retired to his chamber, and lay down upon his bed. In silence and in solitude, he meditated upon the course he should adopt. And having considered within himself, to use his own quaint language, that if a man should fall into a pit, his duty would be to endeavour to get out again, he resolved upon abandoning his experiments for a while, and addressing himself to his old vocation of a painter.

He seems to have found no difficulty in obtaining employment. "People," he says, "thought him a better painter than he really was;" but probably there was a grace, a dash, an originality about his work which caught the popular taste. After about a year's assiduous labour, he so far recovered himself as to be able to pay his debts, re-establish his credit, and lay by a small reserve fund. He then felt justified in resuming his enterprise, and with great gladness of heart returned to his beloved enamel.

We have now arrived at the year 1549. Palissy was about forty years old, and had spent

ten years in the discovery of the great secret, and of the means of utilizing it. Another probation of eight years was before him, but the severest part of the trial was past. He had now only to learn the properties of various kinds of clay, and to acquire by practice the requisite skill in manipulation. At first he encountered numerous vexatious accidents. The very next batch of vessels, with which he hoped to redeem his reputation with his family and among his neighbours, was unfortunately destroyed by an unforeseen mishap. There occurred an accident, he says, of which I had not thought; for the violence of the flame of fire carried a quantity of ashes against the pieces. Consequently, in those parts where the ashes got encrusted the vessels were rough and ill polished, the ashes being embedded in the enamel like flies in amber.

But the matchless perseverance of the man was proof against evil fortune. He lost neither his courage nor his hopefulness; and a spirit of this sort will eventually prevail over the world. He now instructed some potters to make him a large number of earthen lanterns, to hold his precious master-works when he put them in the furnace, and protect them from embers or other accretions.

The plan proved successful ; and Palissy produced a supply of vessels of different colours which found a ready market, and enabled him to “keep the wolf from the door.” But he longed to do something more than this. He had the soul of the true artist, and it was his ambition to give to the world some “things of beauty” which should be calculated to refine the taste, to stimulate a love of and a feeling for the becoming, and be not unworthy of ranking with the grand work of the ancients. Before he succeeded in this honourable ambition he met with many mischances which would utterly have overwhelmed a weaker mind. As, when he had made a batch, it would prove to be too much or too little baked, and, either way, would be of no account. He had not learned as yet the golden mean which lies ever between the two extremes—the over-much and the over-little ! At one time his work would be baked in front, but not sufficiently so behind. If he endeavoured to correct this fault, the work would be burned behind, and the front not baked at all. At another time, it would be baked on the right hand, and not on the left. Sometimes the coat of enamel was too thick, sometimes too thin; sometimes, when enamels of different colours

were in the furnace, some were completely calcined before the others had melted. He experienced, moreover, many difficulties in the choice and management of the different kinds of clay. We will give an instance, and will use, as nearly as possible, his own words :—

Once, he says, I had collected some of the earth of Poitou, and laboured upon it for fully six months before my batch was complete, because the vessels I made were very elaborate in character, and of a comparatively high price.

Now, in making the said vessels of the earth of Poitou, I made some of them of the earth of Saintonge, on which I had worked some years before, and had gained sufficient experience as to the intensity of heat it needed. And thinking that the same degree of heat would serve for all earths, I baked my ware of Poitou clay along with that of Saintonge clay, to my exceeding loss; inasmuch as when the Saintonge ware was sufficiently baked, I thought that of Poitou would also be properly done; but when I came to enamel my vessels, I found those of Poitou clay were still moist, and all the enamelled pieces dissolved and broke up, as limestone will do when soaked in water. At the same time, the Sain-

tonge ware, baked in the same furnace and at the same degree of heat, turned out excellently well.

So true it is that a man who labours in the potter's craft is always an apprentice, because of the unknown nature of the different kinds of clay.

In this prolonged trial Palissy suffered severely; and had he not been a man of unusual physical vigour, even his wonderful mental energy and firmness of will could not have carried him through it.

For the period of two years, he says, I was so wasted in my person, that there was neither form nor prominence of muscle on my arms or legs; also, the said legs were of one size throughout, so that the garters with which I tied my stockings were at once, when I walked, down upon my heels, with the stockings too. I often walked about the fields of Saintes, considering my miseries and weariness, and, above all things, that in my own house I could have no peace, nor do anything that was considered good.

This want of home sympathy seems to have been bitterly felt by Palissy; and no doubt the darkness of his years of waiting and watching would have been greatly cheered and more easily

endured, had the light of human affection sometimes shone upon it. Alas ! it is one of the misfortunes of genius, that of the highest of all earthly consolations—the consolation which springs from tender sympathy—it is generally deprived. Happy they who in such a case can turn for comfort, and for strength to endure, and for courage to wait, to their Father who is in heaven, and who never refuses to listen to the prayers and aspirations of the trustful, reverent, earnest soul !

Fifteen or sixteen years were occupied by Palissy in the noble work of attaining to perfection in the art of moulding and enamelling decorative and artistic pottery. And then the reward came for which he had so heroically striven. He could justly call himself an artist; and, in his own sphere, was as true an artist as the most skilful worker in marble or the precious metals. There is a peculiar character about his work—about the Palissy ware, as it is called—which can never be mistaken. Perhaps its distinctive feature is its faithful imitation of natural objects. Those which Palissy had so lovingly studied in the wood, and meadow, and on the green hillside, he reproduced with an extraordinary fidelity. He

reproduced the bright colours and graceful outlines of the plants and animals with which his wanderings had made him familiar. The beautiful marine shells scattered on the neighbouring shores, the green lizard basking in the sun, the frog which hopped and chattered in the salt-marsh, the glittering snake which flashed for a moment across the woodland path, the dragon-fly hovering over the shining pool, the ivy trailing round the shattered forest tree, the blooming bracken, the marish-plants, and the most fanciful forms of the most familiar foliage,—these were his constant inspiration. He reproduced them lovingly and faithfully on his rustic basins or dishes and his swelling vases. These were genuine works of art, were used only for ornamental purposes, and commanded a ready sale and a costly price.

The colours which he delighted in were chiefly the golden yellow of the harvest corn, the deep purple tint of the far-off forests, the intense green of the meadow-herbage, the rich brown of the newly-ploughed mould. These he combined, or contrasted, so as to produce a marvellously fine effect.

While he was still at Saintes he was entrusted with an important work by the Constable Mont-

morency, whose successful execution introduced him to the notice of the wealthy merchants and seigneurs of France, and laid the foundation of his fortune. Of the decorations which he lavished on the Constable's château, only the pavement in the chapel and galleries remains; but this sufficiently attests the genius of the artist. The designs of the enamelled tiles composing it were wholly original, and the subjects were taken from the Scriptures. They are equally remarkable for expressive grouping and admirable colouring.

In one part of the sacristy the Passion of our Lord was depicted upon pottery, in sixteen pictures, enclosed in an appropriate framework, but carefully copied from the drawings of Albert Durer. In one of the groves of the garden formerly flowed a beautiful spring called *Fontaine Madame*, and to this was attached a rustic grotto, which Palissy always spoke of as a triumph of ingenuity. The rock whence the shining waters fell was wrought of his new ware, appropriately coloured, and all about the margin of the pool below figures of frogs and fishes were placed, and lizards seemed to bask among the stones, and serpents to coil in and out of the luxuriant grasses. On a frieze above was inscribed in mosaic, formed

with various coloured stones, the Scriptural injunction :—

*"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."*

It is supposed that in the course of the inquiries suggested by his formation of this fountain, and the arrangements made for its supply, he was led to the discovery of the true theory of springs; a discovery which he afterwards made known in one of his interesting treatises.

Happily engaged in work which suited his genius, while it brought him an ample remuneration, and holding aloof from the political struggles of the time, Palissy prospered and was at peace. The darkness seemed to have vanished, and the warmth and splendour of the sunshine to have gathered in around him. There was tranquillity in his home, and his wife at length acknowledged the value of the labours which had cost him so many weary years, and which she had done so little to cheer and alleviate. The hardships he had undergone belonged apparently to a distant past; resolution, and perseverance, and patience had swept aside every difficulty. It was the old, old story,—the diligent hand had prospered, and the firm, steadfast heart had prevailed in its long

and painful struggle. Comfort was in his household ; and in his studio he worked with two well-grown sons, Mathurin and Nicolas, and, you may be sure, the furnace never wanted for fuel !

Meantime, the religious dissensions between Papist and Huguenot, which had convulsed France, found their way into the quiet town of Saintes. The Huguenots, unhappily, began to quarrel among themselves, and the Papists took advantage of their discords to prepare for the recovery of their former supremacy. Saintes was nominally a Huguenot town ; but many who had embraced the new religion found it too strict for their tastes, and stealthily returned to their old profession and its looser ways. .

Palissy, as we have seen, was a Huguenot,— pure, zealous, conscientious ; but he took no direct part in the warfare of the Church. When occasion arose, however, he spoke out honestly what he believed to be the truth, and his sense of duty prevented him from sparing the evil-doer. Against the loose-living Papists, the priests, who fed well and drank long, but neglected their pastoral duties, he cherished a very deep aversion, and he did not fear to smite them with heavy censure. Quoting the prophet Ezekiel, he said to them :—

" Woe be to you, shepherds, who eat the fat,  
and clothe you with the wool, and leave my flock  
scattered upon the mountains ; I will require it  
at your hands." \*

\* Ezekiel xxxiv.





## CHAPTER IV.

### PALISSY THE REFORMER.

**A**S Palissy threw in worldly circumstances, his heart was stirred within him to show his deep gratitude to the God who had blessed his efforts by making known His truth to the poor and ignorant. He began, therefore, to gather around him a small congregation—at first not exceeding five or six in number—to whom, every Sunday, he read the Scriptures, expounding them in simple and earnest language. He gives a very graphic and touching account of the origin of this little company, which in time developed into a flourishing church. Moved, he says, with an earnest desire for the advancement of the gospel, he was wont to read the Bible daily with his son Victor. Afterwards, the two, taking counsel together, one quiet Sabbath morning, assembled a few neighbours, to whom Palissy read

"certain passages and texts which he had put down in writing, and offered for their consideration." And he said,—

"That each man, according to the gifts he had received, should distribute them to others ; and that every tree which bore not fruit would be cut down and cast into the fire."

He proposed to them, also, the Parable of the Talents, and a great number of such texts ; and this he did, with a desire to attain two good objects : the first, to show that it was the duty of all people to speak of the statutes and ordinances of God, and that his doctrine might not be despised on account of his own abject state ; the second end was to excite certain of his hearers to do as he was doing. In this he succeeded ; for in that same hour they agreed together that each in his turn should deliver the weekly exhortation. And as in this they undertook a work in which they had never been instructed, it was resolved that they should put their exhortations down in writing, and read them before the assembly, to the end that everything might be duly weighed and carefully considered.

Such was the origin of the Reformed Church in the town of Saintes. Its foundation was

greatly aided by the advice and sympathy of Philibert Hamelin, one of the leaders of the French Huguenots, who, bred a priest, had discovered and renounced the errors of French Catholicism, and become a faithful witness to the truth as it is in our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherever he went—and he travelled to and fro, like an earnest missionary—he exerted himself to enlarge the borders of the Reformed Church, and distributed Bibles translated into the French tongue. He was so just, and of such great zeal, that though he was a man ill capable of walking, he would never accept the horses which many urged upon him in the fulness of their affection. And being but slenderly provided with this world's goods, he fared forth in true apostolic fashion, carrying only a simple staff in his hand.

In 1557, he was thrown into the prison of Saintes as a troublesome and pestilential heretic. There he was visited by Bernard Palissy, who exerted himself strenuously to obtain his release. He called upon six of the judges and magistrates of the town, and remonstrated boldly against their ill-treatment of a man of such blameless life. He told them that, like the Jews of old, they knew not what they did, in imprisoning a pro-

phet or an angel of God, sent to announce his word and judgment of condemnation to men in the last days. His influence was so far successful that, during the remainder of his captivity in Saintes, Hamelin was more kindly treated ; but the magistrates refused to release him, and sent him to Bordeaux, where he afterwards sealed his confession of faith with his blood.

Meantime, the little Church at Saintes prospered mightily. "God so well favoured our affair," says Palissy, "that although our assemblies were most frequently held in the depth of midnight, and our enemies very often heard us passing through the streets, yet it happened that God so overruled them as to keep us uninjured under his protection. And when he willed that his Church should be manifested publicly and in the face of day, he fulfilled in our town an admirable work ; for two of the principal magistrates, who would not have permitted us to meet in public, were sent to Toulouse, wherefore we had the boldness to hire the Market Hall." These arch-persecutors were absent from Saintes for two years, during which period Palissy and his brethren enjoyed unwonted peace.

Before the era of persecution began, the Church

had so gained in influence that games, lewd dances, ballads, banquets, and superfluities of head-dress and gildings had ceased ; there were few outbreaks of scandalous words, and scarcely any brawls in the streets. Actions at law were beginning greatly to diminish ; for if two men of the congregation meditated legal proceedings, their elders interfered, and brought about an accommodation. When the holy Easter festival arrived, held in commemoration of the resurrection of our Lord, many, engaged in hatreds, dissensions, and quarrels, were reconciled. The Church had prospered so well that even the civil magistrates felt constrained to prohibit evils which previously they had tacitly sanctioned. Innkeepers were no longer allowed to have gaming in their houses, or to give meat and drink to their townsmen ; in order that these poor, sinful, debauched drunkards might be compelled to return to their families. In these times, on a Sunday, might be seen the delightful spectacle of the tradesmen and others rambling through the fields and groves and gardens, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, and reading to and instructing one another. Their daughters and virgins might also be seen seated in the shadow of the trees, or among the

bloom of the gardens, and, in like manner, delighting themselves by raising their voices in harmonious praise to God. In truth, the old order of things had passed away, and a new order had obtained; an order of modesty, peace, charity, and Christian well-doing.

This happy time, however, was soon to pass away. Catherine de Medicis, during the minority of her son, the unhappy Charles IX., became chief ruler of France, and inaugurated a bitter persecution against all who professed the tenets of the Reformed faith. Immediately the Papists took heart, and incited by their priests, began to plunder and oppress and slay. In self-defence the Huguenots took up arms, and every town in France was speedily filled with the din of contending factions. The evil spirit entered the little Eden of Saintes, and the Papist party, who had hitherto refrained from open interference with Palissy and his companions, asserted the superiority of numbers. Both sides were embittered in feeling by the massacre of Vassy, in 1562, when men, women, and children were attacked indiscriminately, and sixty of them murdered, by a band of Papist soldiery. The Catholics felt they had gone too far to retreat: the Huguenots saw

that their safety lay in a steadfast and determined resistance. And so the deadly work went on. It was a grand but terrible struggle of province against province, city with city, house with house, man with man. Fanaticism reduced France to a land of cannibals, and the gloomiest imagination would fail to conceive all the variety of horrors which were then practised.

Of the priests and their partisans in the town of Saintes; which, in a few short months, was changed from an Arcady of peace and brotherly love to a place of devilish strife and discord, Palissy writes :—"They did deeds so wretched that the mere recollection of them is a horror. They rose to disperse, engulf, ruin, and destroy all members of the Reformed Church. To avoid their execrable and shameful tyrannies, I withdrew myself into the secret recesses of my house, that I might not behold the murders, cursings, and indecent deeds which were done in our rural glades. And having thus withdrawn into my house for the space of two months, I had warning that hell was let loose, and that all the spirits of the devils had broken into the town of Saintes; for where, but a little time before, I had heard psalms and sacred songs, and all honest words of

edification and of good example, there I heard nothing but blasphemies, blows, menaces, tumults, all miserable words, dissoluteness, lewd and detestable songs, in such wise, that it seemed to me as if all virtue and holiness on earth had been smothered and extinguished ; for out of the Château of Taillebourg issued certain imps, who wrought more evil than the demons of antiquity. They, entering the town, accompanied by certain priests, with naked sword in hand, exclaimed, 'Where are they ?' They must cut throats immediately ; and so they did to those who walked abroad, well knowing they would meet with no resistance, for those of the Reformed Church had all disappeared."

The armed Huguenot citizens of Saintes had disappeared, as Palissy says ; for they had marched to join the army of the Huguenot leader, the Count de la Rochefoucault, who was preparing to attack the Catholics under Duras. A band of Papist soldiers, led by one Noyent, took advantage of their absence to pounce upon Saintes, and sweep through its undefended streets with fire and sword.

Every day fresh reports reached Palissy of the frightful crimes that were committed. But nothing

seems to have grieved him more than that certain little children of the town, who met daily in an open space near the spot where he lay concealed, ever exerting himself to produce some work of his art, should divide themselves into two parties, and hurl volleys of stones at one another, swearing and blaspheming in the most execrable language that ever man could utter. Often he was seized with an almost irresistible desire to risk his life by going out to punish them ; but he said in his heart the Seventy-ninth Psalm, beginning, " O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance."

Palissy's workshop, which had been erected for him partly at the expense of the Constable de Montmorency, did not long shelter him from the violence of the storm. It was broken open by a wild rabble, encouraged and supported by the officers of justice, and all the precious works of art which it contained were recklessly destroyed. He himself held for his protection a written safeguard, given him by Louis de Bourbon, Duke of Montpensier, and nearly all the great men in the province of Saintonge were his patrons and friends. But he had been too bold and resolute an advocate of the new faith to be exempted longer from

the fury of persecution. And as there were friends who in the daytime would have heard of his arrest, and interfered on his behalf, the officers of justice forced their way into his house under the cover of the darkness. He was rudely seized, muffled up in a cloak, set upon horseback behind an armed trooper, and hurried away to a dungeon at Bordeaux, in those days the usual ante-chamber to the scaffold. As he went, he lifted up his heart in hope and trust to his Heavenly Father, and murmured a psalm much loved by the persecuted Huguenots :—

“ The time is dark, we faint with woe,  
Our foes are mightier far than we ;  
They say, ‘ Their God forsakes them now,  
And who shall their deliverer be ? ’  
Lord, show Thy presence, prove Thy power,  
And save us at the latest hour.”





## CHAPTER V.

### PALISSY IN MIDDLE AGE.

**F**ROM the fate impending over Palissy the reformer he was saved by Palissy the artist. The nobles and merchant-princes of France saw that his death would be the extinction of a decorative art of high value, and one calculated to increase the manufacturing resources of the country. He was saved from the stake or the gallows through the secret of the white enamel! Had he not persevered so resolutely and so successfully in the quest, he might have perished at Bordeaux as a heretic and blasphemer. His blameless life, his high character, his many active virtues, would not have stayed the hands of his persecutors; he owed his life to his unflinching devotion to art.

Palissy's trials came upon him through the Dean and Chapter of Saintes. These men, never-

theless, had no other ground of complaint against him, except that he had again and again urged upon them certain passages of Holy Writ, in which it is written, that he is unhappy and accursed who drinks the milk and wears the wool of the sheep, without providing for it pasture. In other words, he had boldly reproved them for neglect of duty. He thought, in his guiltless simplicity, that for his frank speaking they ought to have loved him; but in this he showed his ignorance of human nature. We rarely cherish gratitude towards those who show us, as in a mirror, the true likeness of our faults. It is no wonder, therefore, that these unfaithful priests meditated his destruction; and, indeed, had it depended on the judges of Saintes, he would have been put to death before his friends could have interfered.

The Sire de Pons, king's lieutenant in Saintonge, and one of Palissy's patrons, had prevented the complete annihilation of the artist's studio, which the priests and magistrates of Saintes had sought to bring about. But as Palissy's arrest took place by night, he was not made aware of it in time to effect his rescue. At Bordeaux the Sire de Pons was powerless, for there the

parliament ruled with sovereign authority ; and Palissy's enemies knew that, once he was flung into prison there, only the king's intervention could save him.

The artist's friends, however, lost no time in interfering on his behalf. Were they not awaiting his skill and industry to complete the decoration of their châteaux and palaces ? They hastened to communicate, therefore, with the Constable de Montmorency, who repaired to the presence of the all-powerful Catherine de Medicis, and pleaded for the life and liberty of his ingenuous potter. It must be owned, to the credit of the queen-mother, that she had a quick appreciation of art, and a sincere respect for its professors, and she probably thought the life of an artist of more importance than the death of a heretic. By an edict in the king's name Palissy was appointed "Potter to the King ;" an appointment which removed him from the jurisdiction of the Parliament of Bordeaux. As a royal servant, his cause could be heard and decided only by the Grand Council. Palissy, therefore, was saved.

With characteristic tranquillity, he returned to his family, and resumed his beloved avocations in the ruined town of Saintes. He also addressed

himself to the preparation of an elaborate work, the "Recepte Veritable," which was printed and published at Bordeaux, and dedicated to the Queen-Mother and the Constable de Montmorency. It contained treatises on four subjects: —agriculture, natural history, gardening, and how to fortify a town so as to make it serve as a city of refuge in times of trouble. It is noticeable that in this book, though he had so recently escaped a cruel death, Palissy did not fear to proclaim his religious opinions with the utmost frankness.

It may interest the reader if we condense Bernard Palissy's minute descriptions of his ideal garden, as they are set forth in his ingenious and valuable treatise.

He proposed to fix its site in some plain bounded by mountains, highlands, or rocks, on the sides of the north wind and the west wind, in order that the said mountains, highlands, and rocks might be utilized for its adornment.

He would take care also to fix it below some spring of water issuing from the said rocks, and in such a situation as that a green meadow should lie beneath it, to the end that one might pass from the garden into the meadow.

The site selected, Palissy proposed to divide it into four equal parts. And there should be a great wall formed like a cross in the said garden, and at each of the four extremities of the cross a cabinet, and in the centre a noble amphitheatre. Also, at the four corners of the garden a cabinet should be erected ; making, in all, eight cabinets and one amphitheatre ; all the eight cabinets to be differently embellished, and of such a contrivance as had never before been seen or spoken of.

The stream of water which Palissy regarded as an indispensable adjunct to his garden was to be carried through each of the eight cabinets, and being retained in each in various proportions, would escape from it again through upwards of a hundred tiny jets.

Then of the cabinets :—

That at the northern corner, adjoining the rocks, was to be built of bricks, coated externally with unhewn rocks, and so contrived that persons descending upon it from above should walk upon its roof without knowing that they stood upon a building. On the roof fruits were to be planted, and such herbs as yield seeds grateful to song-birds, so that they might be enticed to make it a place of resort.

The water, carried between the rock-work and the wall, was to issue again from the clefts and fissures as a natural spring.

Inside the cabinet would be smooth, with windows looking southward, and seats built into the wall. Between each two seats would stand a column raised upon a pedestal, and ornamented with a capital, while round the cabinet would run architrave, frieze, and cornice. The surface of the walls would shine with devices of coloured enamels, so burnt and wrought that they would appear to be one piece, polished like a mirror, and glowing with richly contrasted hues. Lastly, the frieze would bear the inscription :—"God hath pleasure only in that man with whom wisdom dwelleth."

The second cabinet, in the next corner on the northern side, facing the south, was also designed externally to resemble the cliff against which it was built; fruits and plants would grow on its roof; and springs of fresh water issue from it. It was to be constructed of brick; but in the interior, between the seats, Palissy proposed to place instead of columns grotesque figures quaintly painted in enamel, and around the frieze to inscribe, in antique characters :—"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

The third cabinet, at one of the southern corners, adjacent to the meadow, resembled the others externally, but its interior was formed, in Palissy's design, of bricks disposed irregularly, as though it were a cavern hewn out of the rock. Cavities served for seats; and the disposition of the surface suggested a carelessly hewn frieze. The whole was covered with white enamel, and afterwards lightly and delicately painted, while the frieze was lettered:—"Wisdom will not make her dwelling in the sinful body, nor in the soul that is disposed to evil."

The fourth cabinet, in the south-western angle, adjoining the mountain on the west, was covered with earth and plants, and simulated a natural rock from which water flowed abundantly. The interior wore a strikingly rough appearance. It was tortuous in its ground-plan, and from the roof depended so many projections that one could not look at it without an apprehension of its immediate fall. Its windows were irregular in shape. The surface was finely enamelled with veins of jasper and chalcedony, and strange devices and figures growing and vanishing from floor to roof. There was no frieze; but the inscription was not wanting, and here as elsewhere

it inculcated a love of wisdom :—“Without wisdom it is not possible to please God.”

Then, as to the four cabinets at the extremities of the cruciform walk which traversed the garden in its length and breadth, these were all formed of foliage, but under the branches overshadowing each was placed a rock.

“The first rock, in the cabinet on the north, shall be made,” says Palissy, “of earth, modelled, baked, and enamelled, after the fashion of a sinuous rugged rock, of many strange colours ;—such as I am now making for the grotto of my lord the Constable, not exactly according to the same design, because this work is not of the same intention.

“Note, then, that at the base and foot of the rock there will be a natural trench or receptacle for the water, which will be equal in length to the said rock. For this cause, I will make projections on my rock, along the said trench ; upon which projections I will place several frogs, tortoises, crabs, lobsters, and a great number of all kinds of shells, the better to imitate the rock. Also, there will be several branches of coral, whereof the roots will be at the foot of the rock, in order that the said corals may have the ap-

pearance of having grown within the said trench.

" *Item*, a little higher on the said rock, there will be several clefts and concavities, on which will be some serpents, aspics, and vipers, which will couch and twist on the said projections, and within the clefts : and all the rest of the height of the rock will be sloping, tortuous, and irregular, with numerous kinds of herbs and mosses that commonly grow about rocks and damp places trained all over it. Above the said mosses and herbs will be a great number of serpents, aspics, vipers, and lizards, which will appear to run over the said rock ; some upwards, some to one side, some downwards, disposed in many pleasant attitudes and agreeable contortions ; and all the said animals shall be modelled and enamelled so like to nature, that the natural lizards and serpents shall frequently come to them with wonder ; as you know that there is a dog in my workshop, at which many other dogs have growled, supposing it to be alive. And from the said rocks will distil numerous jets of water, which shall fall into a trench within the said cabinet, and this trench shall teem with natural fishes, frogs, and tortoises. And because upon the adjoining bank

shall be fishes and frogs, modelled according to my art of earth, they who shall visit the said cabinet shall think the said fishes, tortoises, and frogs to be living, and to have come forth from the pond, seeing that live denizens the said pond is intended to possess.

“Also : in the same rock will be formed some kind of recess, to hold the glasses and cups of persons feasting within the cabinet ; and in the same way certain bins and little receptacles will be excavated in the rock for the cooling of the wine during a repast, which receptacles will always contain cold water ; because when they shall be full, according to the prescribed measure of their capacity, the superfluous water will overflow into the trench, and so the water will always be fresh within the said receptacles.

“Also : in the said cabinet will be a table, similar in material to the rock, which will be supported on a rocky base ; and the said table will be of an oval fashion, being enamelled, enriched, and coloured with divers colours of enamel, which will shine like a mirror. And they who shall be seated to banquet at the said table will be able to put fresh water to their wine without quitting the said cabinet ; for they

will take it from the jets of the fountains of the said rock."

Perhaps we have quoted enough to illustrate the originality of thought and fertility of fancy which distinguished Palissy's treatment of every subject. His garden, we imagine, had his design been carried out, would hardly have commended itself as a whole to our English taste, though it would undoubtedly have presented some striking features, and its ingenious arrangements must have commanded admiration. But as an additional evidence of his inexhaustible resources, we would fain put before the reader his description of the four green cabinets, or arbours, which marked the extremities of the great walk.

For the cabinet we have already sketched, the trees composing it were to be trained on what we may term an architectural plan.

Young elms, planted at equal distances, were to be reared and lopped until their trunks grew to a sufficient height to form the columns of a little temple.

In these, above and below, circular wounds were to be cut, so as to produce a deposit of fresh wood and natural protuberances, corresponding to the pedestals and capitals of ordinary columns.

The branches springing from these living capitals were to be elaborately wrought into the pattern of an architrave, frieze, and cornice, with all the accessories of a finished architectural design.

The first young elm boughs having thus grown into the exact design of a miniature temple, all the remaining shoots would be forced to develop uniformly into a dense green roof, impervious to rain. And in order that a warning against ingratitude might be given even by "insensible and vegetative things," characters in leaf and spray and twig were to be worked into the following text from the Book of Wisdom:—"When the fools perish, then they shall call upon Wisdom; and she will mock when their fear cometh, because they would none of her counsel when she uttered her voice in the streets, when she cried in the chief places of concourse and in the openings of the gates, and uttered her words in the city."

The second green cabinet, to the east of the garden, we must imagine to have resembled, like the first, a miniature temple of foliage, but the fountain within was walled round with white diaphanous flints, projecting here and there so as to form seats. Little wheels were set in motion

by its falling waters, whose revolution caused certain tiny bellows to blow into flageolets placed in a brook at the foot of the well; and these flageolets, piping among the water, gave forth warbling sounds like the hurried notes of birds, and, more particularly, like those of the nightingale. On the frieze of the cabinet might be read: —“The children of wisdom are the church of the just;” and in the pediment, on the three outer faces, the following inscriptions:—“Perverse thoughts part themselves from God;” “Fools despise wisdom and instruction;” “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom.”

The third of the green cabinets, under the western rock, was constructed, like the others, in the form of a living temple, but the natural rock itself was used for the rock of the cabinet. A system of water-pipes, conducted through it, poured out a number of apparently natural fountains. Natural corals, unpolished, were attached here and there to its surface, as well as rare stones, such as chalcedony, jasper, porphyry, and crystals. A table formed of a rare stone rested on a rocky pedestal, encrusted with jasper and chalcedony. In this third cabinet the inscription of the frieze was as follows:—“The fruit of the righteous is a

tree of life ;” and on the three faces of the pediment—“The way of life is above to the wise ;” “The Lord giveth wisdom ;” and “Wisdom giveth life to them that have it.”

The last cabinet, to the south, contains a rock, hollowed, and studded with rare stones from the sea-shore, both such as naturally would be found there, and others that had lain among the ballast brought from foreign climes, and been discharged out of the holds of ships. With these were intermingled cunningly-wrought models of lizards and serpents, with artificial turquoises ; while a spring murmured melodiously in the leafy recess, and variously-coloured stones formed into a mosaic on the frieze reproduced the text:—“Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and ye that have no money.” On the external frieze was written:—“The fountain of wisdom is the Word of God.” And the three inscriptions on the pediments were:—“The love of the Lord is wisdom ;” “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ;” and “The crown of wisdom is the fear of the Lord.”

Another conspicuous feature of Palissy’s ideal garden was its terrace.

It was bordered (in imagination, for the artist’s

idea was never carried out in all its fulness, though it would seem to have been fruitful of suggestions to the French school of architect-gardeners) by a balustrade, adorned with enamelled vases of violets, damask roses, and the balmiest, sweetest flowers ; while, on the other side, thickly overhung with hawthorns and other shrubs and trees, pleasant both to man and birds, were the doors and windows, fanciful in design, of an upper series of chambers, excavated in the rock.

Of these upper chambers some were set apart as pavilions ; others, for the useful purpose of storing plums, cherries, and such fruits as it is customary to dry in the sun, so that they might be removed from their receptacles to the exposed and sunny portion of the terrace.

The hawthorns and other trees which overhung these chambers were so disposed as to entice thither the feathered minstrels of the air, who built their nests among the leafy boughs ; and in winter seeds were freely scattered beneath their shade, that the birds might not be forced to wander elsewhere in quest of food.

The stranger walking upon the sunny terrace, and enjoying its sweet odours and agreeable melodies, was ever and anon surprised by coming

upon some gentleman or lady inclining on the balustrade, and gazing pensively upon the flowers; and his surprise was increased when, after politely bowing to them, he discovered them to be figures wrought in Palissy's enamelled ware !

There was also, in the centre of this marvellous garden,—that is, there would have been, had Palissy ever realized his ingenious fancies,—a noble amphitheatre. The stream brought down from the mountain, after meandering through groves and parterres, was divided in the centre into two currents, which diverged so as to encircle a pleasant island-gem, and, reuniting, continued its way through the garden in a single channel. Along the margin of this island grew poplar-trees at equal distances, whose stems having been allowed to grow into little columns of a sufficient height to serve as pillars to the amphitheatre, had inclined towards each other so as to unite their topmost boughs, and form a pyramid of greenery. A vane fixed on the summit of this pyramid received into its mouth whatever wind came up from any quarter, and the wind flowing through a series of skilfully arranged musical pipes, transformed them into an *Aeolian harp*.

of unusual magnitude, and filled the air with music.

Within the amphitheatre, which, of course, was approached by bridges, a circular table stood, with easy seats around it, and there were little closets and recesses containing vessels and vases for the service of the place. It was entered by four doors, corresponding to the four broad walks which converged upon it. Outside, at a distance of about five feet, a circle of young shrubs was formed by means of brass wire; and brass wires ran from the summit of these shrubs to the summit of the columns, and were interwoven between them, so as to form a kind of aviary in which birds of bright plumage darted to and fro, and song-birds constantly warbled their sweetest strains.

And by such means, as Palissy remarks, those who banqueted under the said pyramid enjoyed the pleasure of the song of birds, of the *croak of frogs* in the encircling brook, of the murmur of the waters flowing at the feet of the tall columnar poplars, of the freshness of the stream and the neighbouring trees, and the cool airs of the soft wind engendered by the ripple of the abundant foliage.

He concludes his description by telling us that the idea of his garden first came to him while he listened to the 104th Psalm, sung in the fields by pious Huguenot damsels, in the palmy days of the Reformed religion. As he heard them chant the praises of the Lord who sendeth the springs into the rivers which run among the hills,—who watereth the hills from above,—who bringeth forth grass for the cattle, and green herbs for the service of men,—the plan of his earthly paradise gradually unfolded itself to his fertile imagination, and his heart was penetrated with a sense of the divine beauty that clothes the earth as with a garment. Ever since that time, he says, I have done nothing but toil over again within myself the construction of this garden ; and often, in sleeping, I have seemed to be busied with it, as it happened to me last week, when lying upon my bed, I saw it in my dream already made, and completed, after the fashion I have now described ; and I began to eat its fruits and enjoy its various attractions ; and it seemed to me that as I paced, in the morning-light, through its groves and flowers, its hills and streams, its green arbours and shining waters, I came to consider the marvellous deeds which the

King of kings has commanded Nature to accomplish.

How delightful to think, says one of his biographers, of Palissy now : the storms of his life overpast ; his mind recreating itself with innocent and pleasant fancies ; of Palissy at his ease, rejoicing in the peace and prosperity of his home ; occasionally journeying abroad, to Ecouen and elsewhere, on matters connected with his vocation ; at other times wandering leisurely among the meadows, and valleys, and woods he loved so well, and understood so thoroughly ! His fame was spread abroad throughout all France, and into Italy, and Germany, and other civilized countries ; his patrons were numerous and wealthy ; and his art was doing much to stimulate and refine the national taste. He was reaping a full harvest ; but he had sown in tears, and with much tribulation, and with many sufferings ; and who will say that he did not deserve his reward ? He still continued his experiments on clays and chemicals, so as to develop to the utmost the resources of his art ; and he pursued his inquiries into the secrets of Nature with all the vigour of his youth. For if Palissy loved Art much, he loved Nature more. And let us remember that with his profound and

intense love both of Art and Nature mingled a deep gratitude towards Him from whose almighty wisdom and eternal goodness spring the wonderful loveliness of Nature, and those powers and capacities which man has dedicated to the cultivation and development of Art. In all things he saw God, and for all things he thanked God !





## CHAPTER VI

### PALISSY IN OLD AGE.

**A**BOUT 1563 or 1564 Palissy removed from Saintes to Paris, under the following circumstances :—

The queen-mother, Catherine de Medicis, determined to erect a palace in the capital, worthy of the royal house of France, and engaged as architect the celebrated Jean Bullant. The plan comprehended a noble and magnificent surrounding of park and garden, and to carry out this part of her design she naturally turned to the “Recepte Veritable ;” a book which, as we have seen, was dedicated to her, and which, as we have also seen, contained a most original project for a garden on a scale of unusual splendour. It is probable that Palissy may have been recommended to her by his staunch friend, the Sire de Pons, and by the Constable de Montmorency, whose

château was embellished by the masterpieces of his genius. At all events, the inventor of the beautiful Palissy ware was certainly not unknown to the queen-mother, whose tastes and sympathies would lead her to appreciate at their full value his labours in decorative art.

On receiving the royal command, Palissy removed to Paris, where he established his workshop in the precincts of the Tuileries. He gained greatly by the removal ; not simply in a pecuniary sense, but because it brought him into constant intercourse with men of genius, and enabled him to study the art-works collected in the capital. His labours in the service of the queen-mother formed, of course, only a small part of his daily occupation. His taste, refined and cultivated by a careful contemplation of the masterpieces of Italian artists, now inspired him to surpass all his former designs in richness of fancy and delicacy of execution. Of his larger works,—his rocks, trees, animals, and human figures,—very few memorials are now extant ; but it is known that he was employed upon these to a very large extent. The park at Chaumes was laid out by Palissy, and embodied some of the features of his ideal garden. He was also employed on the

Château of Nècle, in Picardy ; that of Reux, in Normandy ; and the sumptuous royal Château of Madrid, in the Bois de Boulogne.

Those works of the famous potter, says Morley, which were meant to adorn rooms, being smaller, more numerous, and better protected than his garden pieces, have been much more successful in withstanding all the accidents of time. Statuettes, elegant groups, vases, cups, plates, corbels, rustic basins, and clay moulded into beautiful forms, enamelled and painted for many other uses, are still extant, and to this day obtain a high price as works of taste. Some, as we have shown, are covered with exquisitely coloured models of fruit, shells, fishes, and reptiles. Others are bright with tinted representations, in the most delicate bas-relief, of subjects taken from mythology or Holy Writ. The colours used by our artist are always vivid, and generally based upon yellow, blue, or gray, green, violet, or a rich brown. Red and orange he seems to have eschewed.

For ten years Palissy, assisted by his sons Nicolas and Mathurin, was laboriously and happily engaged in his vocation as a potter, recreating his leisure by his favourite studies and investigations in natural history. The erection of the great

palace, now so well known as the Tuileries, proceeded without let or hindrance, under the direction of the architects, Delorme and Bullant; while the gardens began to exhibit some degree of beauty as they expanded under the loving superintendence of Palissy.

In the royal library at Paris is preserved a MS., entitled "Expenses of the Queen Catherine de Medicis," and containing a statement of her expenditure for the year 1570. Here we read of a payment "to Bernard, Nicolas, and Mathurin Palissy, artists in earth, of the sum of two thousand six hundred livres, for all the works in earth, baked and enamelled, which have yet to be done to complete the four parts of the circumference of the grotto begun by the queen in her palace near the Louvre at Paris, according to the agreement made with them."

But the palace on which she had lavished so much wealth and labour the queen-mother abandoned in 1572, terrified by the empty prediction of an astrologer. The Tuileries, however, continued to increase under successive sovereigns; but the present pile exhibits few traces of the architecture of Bullant and Delorme.

The year 1572 was the year of the massacre

of St. Bartholomew, one of the most terrible crimes which has ever stained the pages of ecclesiastical history. Roman Catholics themselves are unable to write of the horrors of that day, when hundreds of helpless men and women and children were cruelly slaughtered, for no other reason than that they had embraced the tenets of the Reformed religion. Those who care to read the dismal story will find it briefly but eloquently told in Mr. Froude's "History of England." After describing the murders committed in the Louvre by dukes and lords, under the eyes of the miserable king, the historian continues :—

" The mob meanwhile was in full enjoyment. Long possessed with the accursed formulas of the priests, they believed that the enemies of God were given into their hands. While dukes and lords were killing at the Louvre, the bands of the sections imitated them with more than success—men, women, and even children, striving which should be the first in the pious work of murder. All Catholic Paris was at the business, and every Huguenot household had neighbours to know and denounce them. Through street and lane, and quay and causeway, the air rang with yells and curses, pistol-shots, and crashing windows ; the

roadways were strewed with mangled bodies, the doors were blocked by the dead and dying. From garret, closet, roof, or stable, crouching creatures were torn shrieking out, and stabbed and hacked at; boys practised their hands by strangling babies in their cradles, and headless bodies were trailed along the trottoirs. Carts struggled through the crowd, carrying the dead in piles to the Seine, which, by special Providence, was that morning in flood, to assist in sweeping heresy away. Under the sanction of the great cause, lust, avarice, fear, malice, and revenge, all had free indulgence, and glutted themselves to nausea. Even the distinctions of creed itself became at last confounded; and every man or woman who had a quarrel to avenge, a lawsuit to settle, a wife or husband grown inconvenient, or a prospective inheritance if obstacles could be removed, found a ready road to the object of their desires."

On this occasion, as in the hour of peril at Bordeaux, Palissy the Huguenot was saved by Palissy the Artist. Doubtless there were many who thirsted after his blood; but the queen-mother's patronage, and his employment in the royal service, were efficient safeguards. He

escaped, and two years afterwards—in 1574—Charles IX. died; the power passed from the hands of the queen-mother's party; Henry III. ascended the throne; and the Huguenots attained to a position of influence. At the accession of the new king, Palissy—or Master Bernard of the Tuileries, as he was generally called—was sixty-five years old. He was regarded by all men as a very honest artist, vindictively watched by some as a Huguenot, respected by others for his wide and accurate knowledge and clear, calm intellect, but by most despised for his want of classical scholarship and his mechanical pursuits. He was well known in Paris, says Morley, and a man to patronize, to talk about as “the poor potter, M. Bernard.” He enjoyed no widely-extended reputation in his own day. A prophet is seldom honoured in his age or country. But his abilities were recognized and admired by “the luxurious, who bought the produce of his labour in the workshop, or the few men who had enough in them of true philosophy to know the value of his labour in the fields.”

His occupation in the workshop he never intermitted. He was before all things and above all things a potter, and he kept steadily to the one

vocation to which he had devoted the best of his years and energies. His other pursuits served as the amusements of his hours of leisure or relaxation. It may be convenient here to state, adopting the language of his latest biographer, that, after his death, the labour of his workshop seems to have been continued by his sons, who, possessing designs, moulds, and unfinished pieces left to them by their father, used them in the prosecution of their business. But the sons of Palissy lacked Palissy's genius; they were workmen, not artists; they could produce but feeble imitations of their father's masterpieces, and failed to sustain the reputation he had so painfully acquired. Whether, when they died, they took out of the world with them the mechanical mysteries of their father's craft, or whether these supplied yet another generation of descendants with the means of a sufficient livelihood, it is now impossible to determine. But it is certain that Palissy's secret of the white enamel soon perished, and of the inadequate efforts of his sons the history of art preserves no record.

We have already referred to Palissy's love of Nature, and to his close and loving study of Nature's works. One of his favourite recreations

was the collection of natural curiosities ; a taste which brought him the acquaintance of many eminent men. His collection was frequently increased by presents from friendly hands. Thus we read of a citizen of Rochelle, named l'Hermite, who sent to him a couple of rare shells, brought from far-away shores ; of Pierre Grevy, a citizen of Saintes, who, finding on his land a remarkable stone, forwarded it to Palissy, because he knew he was curious in such things ; of La Mothe Fénélon, secretary to the King of Navarre, and of the Abbot of Tarpenay, as lovers of letters, who, in like manner, had enriched his little cabinet. This collection was of great assistance to him in his development of the researches which had occupied much of his time and thought, and whose results he embodied in his last and ripest work—a work which entitles him to a very high rank among the natural philosophers of the sixteenth century.

Before publishing this book, the patient, laborious, humble-minded student desired to prove the soundness of his conclusions, and to apply to them every possible test.

Modestly sensible, says Mr. Morley, of his ignorance of those languages in which was contained the learning of past time—believing, nevertheless,

that he had pushed on his knowledge as a naturalist many steps into the future—he wished to ascertain whether, on some points, he might not have deceived himself. It was not improbable that much which he had thought out arduously and unassisted might long have been known to scholars; this is a risk to which the self-educated necessarily are much exposed. It was not impossible that deductions which, to him, seemed beyond the reach of refutation, might already have been exposed to scientific criticism, and, in the light of fuller knowledge, found wanting. At all events, what Palissy desired, was to diffuse truth. If his views were true, they would bear any amount of inquiry or analysis; if they were erroneous, it was fitting that their worthlessness should be detected. He resolved, therefore, to gather around him the most learned scholars and philosophers then resident in Paris; to meet them in his museum; to put before them the results of his investigations; and to show, by means of the specimens and curiosities he had collected, how he had arrived at these results. He proposed to allow the fullest freedom of discussion; and, in the spirit of a true lover of knowledge, he determined to abandon without hesitation any

view that was pronounced unsatisfactory or ill-founded.

Palissy delivered his first course of lectures in 1575, and he continued them for at least ten years, probably more. He delivered them in his museum, and in course of time they attracted the most sagacious minds of France.

A list of some of the most illustrious is appended to his last work, with the information that, after a searching criticism, they had accepted the theories submitted to their notice.

Thus, at the age of sixty-six, the philosopher, vigorous of mind and body, showed no trace of bodily decay. Even nine years later, at the ripe old age of seventy-five, he was distinguished for his keen and ready wit, and the robustness of his physical appearance. "The hale old man, passing from the furnace and the chamber in which shelves and tables were resplendent with the rich creations of his fancy, went into his cabinet, and poured out the lessons he had learned by the road-sides, by the sea-shore, and among the mountains, before a grave assemblage of men paled by study, or grown gray with years."

Among these was the Huguenot surgeon Ambroise Paré, one of the most famous men of his

time, who had been the trusted medical adviser of four French sovereigns, and had introduced into the science of surgery many valuable improvements.

Among them was Master Richard Hubert, surgeon in ordinary to the king, and a man of considerable ability, though by no means the equal of his friend and colleague, Ambroise Paré.

There, too, were the physicians to the light and lively Marguerite, Queen of Navarre; namely, Master François Choisnin, and Monsieur de la Magdalene.

Milon, then a young man, but a young man of great promise, was also present. In the year 1609 he became first physician to Henry IV., and occupied the position left vacant by the death of Paré.

We may mention also, as illustrative of the formidable nature of the criticism Palissy had invited, Messieurs Alexandre de Campege, Guillaume Pacard, Philibert Gilles, Germain Courtain, Jean du Pont, and Pierre Para, all physicians of high repute; Jean Viret, the mathematician; Monsieur dal Bene, the poet; and Nicholas Bergeron, the advocate and classical scholar.

Palissy's own account of the establishment and successful continuance of his lectures and demon-

strations, which may be justly said to have inaugurated a new era in experimental science, will be read with interest.

I considered, he says, that I had devoted much time to the study of earths, stones, waters, and metals, and that old age urged me to multiply the talents which God had given me ; therefore, that it would be good to bring forward to the light my admirable secrets, so as to bequeath them to posterity. But, inasmuch as these topics are high, and comprehended by few men, I hesitated to make the venture until, in the first place, I had ascertained whether the Latins had greater knowledge of them than I had acquired ; and I was sorely perplexed, because I had never seen the opinion of philosophers, and knew not whether or what they had written upon the above-named subjects.

I should have been very glad, continues Palissy, if I had understood Latin, and could have read the volumes of the said philosophers, to gain information from some, and to detect the errors of others ; and thus debating in my mind, I resolved to affix notices at the street-corners in Paris, in order to assemble the most learned doctors and others, to whom I undertook to demonstrate in

these lectures all I had learned concerning fountains, stones, earths, and metals. And in order that only the most learned and most curious might come, I announced in my placards that none would be admitted except upon payment of a dollar for the entry to the said lessons ; and this I did, partly, to see whether, by the help of my hearers, I could extract some contradiction which might have greater assurance of truth than the arguments I purposed laying before them ; knowing well that if I spoke erroneously, there would be Greeks and Latins who would resist me to my face, and who would not spare me, as well on account of the dollar that I should have taken from each, as on account of the time I should have caused them to employ unprofitably. For there were very few of my hearers who could not elsewhere have extracted profit out of something during the time spent by them at my lectures.

It is for this reason I say that, had they found me speaking falsely, I should soon have been baffled ; for I had announced in my placards that if the things therein promised did not prove trustworthy, I would return the fee fourfold.

Thanks be to God, however, never man contradicted me in a single word !

Which being considered, and seeing that I could not have more faithful witnesses, nor men more assured than these in knowledge, I have felt emboldened to discourse to you all these things, well authenticated, in order that you may not doubt their trustworthiness.

Then follows a list of the "noble, honourable, and most learned men" who attended at these lectures ; but with this we need not concern ourselves, as we have already named the most distinguished.

The lectures, after thus undergoing a searching ordeal, were collected and published in 1580, under the title of "Discours Admirables ;" and it may be mentioned, as a proof of their claim on the attention of the scientific student and the lover of nature and natural phenomena, that they have gained the warm eulogium of authorities no less distinguished than Buffon, Haller, and Jussieu. They are full of interest ; of minute facts, gained by close and constant observation ; and they vividly illustrate Palissy's character as a searcher after truth—patient, persevering, industrious, assuming nothing, proving all things !

Palissy was seventy-one years old when he

published his last book. He dedicated it to his constant friend and patron, Sire de Pons, who, probably, was then even older than himself. In the dedication he says :—

“ The number of my years emboldens me to tell you that when, one day, I was considering the colour of my beard, I was led to reflect on the fewness of the days which remain to me to end my course : and hence I came to admire the lilies, and the corn, and many kinds of plants, whose green hues are changed into white, when they are ready to yield up their fruitage. Many trees, too, look hoary as soon as they feel that their vegetative and natural virtues have ceased. A like consideration has reminded me of the saying, that one should take heed not to abuse the gifts of God, and hide the talent in the earth; and, also, how it is written, that better is the fool who conceals his folly than the wise man who conceals his wisdom.

“ It is a just and reasonable thing, therefore, that each should seek to multiply the talent that he has received from God, in obedience to his commandment. Wherefore I have sought to bring into the light the things of which it has pleased God to give me understanding, according to the

measure he has seen fit to bestow upon me, for the behoof of posterity. And because many, in good Latin, or some other polished tongue, have spread abroad their pernicious gifts to mislead our youth, and cause the waste of their time ; even as a Geber, a 'Romaunt of the Rose,' a Raymond Lully, and some disciples of Paracelsus and other alchemists have published books on a so-called science which has wasted much time and thrift. Such hateful books have induced me to explore the earth for the space of some forty years, and to search among her entrails, in order to comprehend the things which she produces in herself ; and by such means I have found grace before God, who has led me to the understanding of secrets hitherto unknown to me, as all may see from my writings contained in this book.

" I know well that some will jest, and declare it impossible for a man ignorant of Latin to have intelligence concerning the things of Nature ; and will assert that it shows great rashness on my part to write in opposition to the opinion of so many ancient and famous philosophers, who have discoursed upon natural facts, and filled the whole world with their wisdom. I know, too, that others will form their judgment by external ap-

pearances, saying that I am nothing more than a poor artisan ; and by such assertions will procure for my book an ill reception. In truth, I have written things which the ignorant will find it difficult to believe."

The title of Palissy's book, translated into English, runs as follows :—

" Admirable Discourses on the Nature of Waters and Fountains, as well Natural as Artificial ; on Metals, on Salts and Salt-springs, on Stones, on Earths, on Fire and Enamels ; with many other excellent secrets of Natural Things. Also, a Treatise on Marl, very useful and necessary for those who are concerned in Agriculture. The whole set forth in Dialogues, which introduce both the Theory and the Practice. By M. Bernard Palissy, Inventor of Rustic Figurines to the King, and to the Queen his Mother."

No doubt in this book there were many things which the ignorant found it difficult to believe, but there was very little which is not nowadays known to the ordinary school-boy. Palissy's theory of the cause and action of springs is universally accepted, and its accuracy has been confirmed by later research. On other 'natural things' he says much that is judicious, and the

book, as a whole, bears abundant testimony to the vigorous intellect of the man and the exactness of his observation.

The “Admirable Discourses” were published in 1580. Four years later Palissy was still lecturing and experimenting in his museum, and pursuing, as opportunity served, his loving study of the fields, and woods, and streams. Thus, one day in winter, he was seen standing by the Seine, opposite the new palace of the Tuileries, surrounded by an attentive throng of listeners, to whom he was explaining the absurdity of the popular belief that the masses of ice floating on the surface of the stream had risen from its depths !

Palissy’s old age was astonishingly vigorous ; especially when we remember through what long and arduous trials he had passed. One of his followers, a constant attendant at his lectures, was the Sieur de la Croix Dumaine, who describes him as “a natural philosopher, and a man of remarkably acute and ready wit,” who seemed about sixty years of age. From his physical robustness and mental energy there is good reason to suppose that, but for an untoward event, he

might have continued his lectures and his researches for some years longer. But his sun was destined to set in cloud and shadow.

Though Palissy, in his scientific treatises and his lectures, never obtruded his theological opinions, or put forward any political speculations, it was well known that he continued an earnest upholder of the Reformed creed, and that neither bribes nor threats, rewards nor punishments, could induce him to waver in the faith once for all delivered to the saints. His lot, in some respects, had fallen upon evil days. Paris, in the last years of the good old man's consistent life, was a hotbed of vice, bigotry, shameless profligacy, and cruel fanaticism. From the most disgusting excesses of depravity, the king and his court turned to the not less disgusting excesses of persecuting zeal. In the latter they were encouraged, and in the former they were excused, by a corrupt and ignorant priesthood. The sermons of the "Louvre" preachers, unlike those of the Master whose example they professed to follow, stimulated the worst passions of human nature. The most revolting spectacles, meantime, were paraded before a bigoted and ill-taught populace. At Chartres, a Capuchin monk, before Henry III.

and his court, blasphemously represented our Lord's ascent of Mount Calvary. From his crown of thorns the blood-drops appeared to trickle ; it was with difficulty he dragged along his cross of painted cardboard ; and occasionally he seemed to stumble beneath his burden, giving utterance to sharp cries of pain. It was with scenes such as these the populace of France was demoralized, while their fiercest passions were artfully excited against the unfortunate Huguenots, whom the priests falsely represented as denying their Lord and Saviour.

Since the massacre of St. Bartholomew, as Mr. Morley observes, the Parisian mobs had grown familiar with deeds of cruelty, and had acquired a keen thirst for blood. In truth, the whole temper of society was more ferocious than it had been of old. The most trivial disputes were settled by the secret dagger or the cup of poison. The shameless Florentine astrologer, who had gained the confidence of Catherine de Medicis, Cosmo Ruggieri, was an adept in the art of poisoning, and sold his fatal drugs in the most open manner. Tortures and executions were of almost daily occurrence ; and the king and his nobles attended them, to gloat upon the sufferings of the wretched

victims, whose only crime, very frequently, was that they had in some way offended a powerful noble. Nor was the presence of women wanting. The country was given over to anarchy and discord; law was violated with the coolest indifference; order was but a name. Throughout the entire reign of Henry III., France was a prey to the worst evils that can afflict a country; and as for the king himself, he was the constant object of plots and intrigues. At times he roused himself from his luxurious sloth, and calling into requisition the talents he undoubtedly possessed, he would baffle the designs of his adversaries; but as soon as the excitement was past he sank back into his former profligate lethargy. "The fire was dead on the hearth of his heart," says D'Aubigné, "and the fiercest gale could only set the ashes flying."

Attended by the gallants of his court, he ran races, leapt ditches, and tested his skill as a marksman, an athlete, or a rider. Among the young nobles he was held in highest honour who could talk most loudly of his achievements as an assassin or a seducer. Their hair tortured into fantastic curls, and their persons decked in the most outrageously absurd costume, they sallied

forth into the streets of Paris, or went capering and shouting at fairs and merry-makings.

Of the more bigoted Roman Catholics, the idol and leader was, at this time, the Duke of Guise, and they laboured to remove Henry, and elevate the Duke to the throne of France in his stead. In 1585 Henry, seeing no other means of escape from the dangers by which he was surrounded, placed himself at the head of this party, issued a decree prohibiting the future exercise of the Reformed worship on pain of death, and banishing all those who had previously adhered to the "heresy." This was no "mere court-quarrel;" it concerned the interests of the whole Huguenot body; it affected the faith, and fortune, and freedom, and life of every man who had abjured the corruptions of Rome. So rigorously was the edict carried out, that the petition of a few poor women, who asked permission to dwell with their children in any remote and obscure nook of their native land, was sternly rejected. All they could obtain was the promise of an unmolested passage to Protestant England.

As for Palissy, at his age flight was impossible; he was helpless in the hands of wretches who respected neither his gray hairs, his misfortunes, his

services, nor his genius. All that his friends could do was to save his life. Thus much was accomplished, chiefly through the interposition of the Duke of Maine; but they could not secure for him his freedom, and he was sent as a prisoner to the Bastille.

It may be that his imprisonment was connived at by his friends as the only certain mode of saving his life.

Shortly afterwards, two young maidens, daughters of Jacques Foucaud, attorney to the Parliament, condemned, like Palissy, for their firm attachment to the principles of the Reformed faith, came to share his captivity, and by their gentle ministrations did much to render the burden of his sorrows endurable.

In the year 1588 it is recorded that the king visited his venerable servant in the dungeon where he suffered for conscience' sake. Fearing lest neither his royal power, nor the old man's gray hairs, should be able to save him from the stake, Henry held with him the following conversation, of which a contemporary record has been preserved :—

" My good man," said the king, " you have been five and forty years in the service of the

queen my mother, or in mine, and we have suffered you to retain your own religious convictions, amidst all the executions and massacres that have taken place. Now, however, I am so pressed by the Guise party and my people, that I have been compelled in spite of myself to imprison these two poor women and you; they are to be burnt to-morrow, and you also, if you refuse to be converted."

"Sire," replied Palissy, "the Comte de Maulvrier came yesterday, on behalf of your majesty, promising life to these two sisters on degrading conditions. They answered that they would now be martyrs for their own honour, as well as for the honour of God. You have several times said that you feel pity for me; but it is I who pity *you*, you who have said, 'I am compelled.' That is not to speak like a king. These maidens and I, who have part in the kingdom of heaven, *we* will teach you how to speak royally. The partisans of Guise, all your people, and yourself, cannot compel a potter to bow down to images of clay."

The two daughters of Jacques Foucaud suffered at the stake in June 1588. When the news of their martyrdom reached the Huguenot camp,

Monsieur du Plessis said to the King of Navarre, afterwards so famous in history as Henri Quatre of France :—"Courage, sire ! You see that even our maidens can face death for the gospel."

Shut out from those sweet sights and sounds which he loved so well ; from the grove and the garden and the meadow, the chime of falling waters and the melody of birds ; deprived of the means of occupying his quick and observant intellect ; excluded from the pleasures of social converse,—sad indeed would have been the fate of Palissy, had he not been supported by a profound faith in the truths of the gospel.

" Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage ;  
Minds innocent and quiet take  
That for a hermitage."

And the Bastille was, in very truth, a hermitage, and a resting-place, for the brave old Huguenot potter in the last days of his useful life.

In the year 1589 Palissy died in the Bastille.

In a memoir of the great potter written by a learned Frenchman, which is quoted by his English biographer, Mr. Morley, occur some just

remarks on the comparative neglect experienced by that "most genuine of working-men" He says that he cannot think without surprise how completely Palissy has remained unknown to the French peasants of whose tongue he made such excellent use, as well as to the philosophers whose science he should have reformed.

Who shall hope, he says, to teach the people, when the sole writer from the rank of the peasants who spoke to them in their language of their life, of their labours, of their interests, from pure experience alone, is not known to them even by name after three centuries? Who will be worthy, who will be capable, of instructing the people, when this man, whose entire life was a constant study, who, seeking an art by which to subsist, raised himself, step by step, to the creation of several modern sciences, has received no attention either from the wise or from the simple?

And now, in our own day, all the ideas of this quick and active mind are revived by the learned. His theories on waters, stones, marl, and manure have been confirmed : mineralogy, geology, paleontology, hydrostatics, physical geography, and organic chemistry have been constituted sciences; Palissy receives due honour as an inventor and a

discoverer. Thus, then, from the story of his life we learn the great truth : That if true glory advances slowly, it advances surely. And for Palissy it consists, not so much in vain honours and statues, as in the inspiration of young men who, ever more, press upwards and onwards in their search after light.

May the reader, as he lays down this little book, resolve, in all sincerity and calmness, to strive even as Palissy strove ; like Palissy, to hunger and thirst after knowledge ; and to love truth, Christian living, and charity with an unwavering and unselfish love !









